Rojat. 1817

DOMESTIC SCENES.

978

FROM THE GERMAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

AGNES DE LILIEN,

STATIRA, RESTLESS MATRON, &c. &c.

Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has surviv'd the fall!
Though few now taste thee unimpair'd and pure,
Or, tasting, long enjoy thee; too infirm,
Or too incautious to preserve thy sweets
Unmixt with drops of bitter, which neglect
Or temper sheds into the crystal cup.

COWPER.

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DOMESTIC SCENES.

THE PARSONAGE.

THE venerable Curate of Wellbury had rested above six months with the dead of his congregation, as a father does amongst the children he has first conducted to their place of repose. Already did the grass grow upon the hillock that contained his remains, and here and there a solitary plaintain mournfully waved its head. The honest rustic passed his grave, with the

same respect as if it had been the bed in which his benefactor slumbered; and many, with a tear, that dropped at the recollection of the virtues of their departed friend, thought—" It is well, worthy man, that thy repose is not disturbed by the knowledge of what thy disconsolate widow, and much afflicted daughter, suffer on thy account, nor how incessantly they lament the loss of thee!"

They were in the right—for the parsonage, heretofore the abode of calm content and domestic happiness, was now become the receptacle of sorrow, and distress of various kinds; for in addition to that which the loss they had recently sustained occasioned, was added heart-harrowing care, and the uncertainty in what manner they should earn their future subsistence. None but those who have experienced it, can conceive the distressed situation of a family, that, with a father, looses its prop, the whole of its support.

Humble mediocrity is generally the

country

country curate's portion, and the comforts they enjoy must be gained by industry, and supported by the strictest economy. Country curates have commonly numerous families, (at which no one ought to jeer, for are not children a blessing of the Almighty's?)—if, therefore, the father dies before his children are provided for, penury and distress are too often their inevitable portion. Those who do not know how the widow and orphan feel, may see it in such a family, and their heart must be made of adamant that is not moved by the sight. We naturally pity the infant dove that is robbed of its fostering parent's care before it is fledged, and humanity prompts us to nurse and cherish it in our bosom as well as we are able; who, therefore, can see a distressed orphan, without feeling a like sensation? none at least entered the house of mourning at Wellbury, without being moved to tears.

The grief that was caused by their confined circumstances, and the privation

 of

of many comforts they had hitherto enjoyed, was trifling, compared to the sorrow that the loss of a husband and father occasioned. His widow, an amiable woman, deplored her loss in silent anguish; and with still greater violence did grief prey upon the youthful mind of his daughter Louisa, a village maid, as lovely and good as any in the whole country. She had, till then, bloomed in the sweet but narrow sphere of domestic happiness, ignorant of all that could embiter life: sorrow, therefore, as a strange sensation, seized hold of her heart with double violence, and the sensibility of her mind added poignancy to her grief. Her brother, who was only seven years old, was too young to feel his loss; and their old maid, Martha, often muttered to herself, when she saw him playing on the green with other children—"Poor child, thou little knowest the misfortune that has befallen thee!"—Her brother's cheerfulness increased Louisa's sadness, and she seemed to mourn for him as well as for herself.

herself. At first her grief was of the most violent kind, and it affected her in a manner that her life was thought to be in danger. She staggered when she walked, as intoxicated; she was feeble and wan as a shadow, and she drooped and faded, like a tender plant, when oppressed by the scorching beams of the mid-day sun.

"Mind if what I say does not prove true," would the country people say to one another. "Louisa will soon follow her father! —You know, when she was a child, she hardly ever left his side. Don't you remember how she used to take hold of his cassock when she went to church with him, and jump and run before him, when he went into the garden or fields; and even when she was grown up he seldom went out without her?"

"Yes, yes," would superstition answer, "the father will soon draw the daughter after him: Some fresh mould was thrown up on his grave last night—mark my words, Louisa will soon die!"

But superstition was happily, in this case, (as it generally is in every other) mistaken. The first storm was blown over, and, as I said before, six months were passed since her father's death, and Louisa was still alive. Human nature can support much —much affliction, without entirely sinking under it. It is true, the time had passed like a feverish dream; one sad day had chased the other, and in the evening she retained but a faint remembrance of the occurrences that had passed in it. Formerly every flower that sprang up in the meadows gave her new delight, but now she hardly perceived that a flower bloomed. Her greatest pleasure used to be a walk in the fields when the corn was ripening, when the shining ears moved like waves over the green, reddish and silver-coloured stalks, and bowed under the gentle pressure of her hand as she passed along. At such times the lark's shrill notes, as it whirled on high, and the chirping of the cricket, used to lull her mind into a soft and pleasing melancholy;

melancholy; and she would with pleasure anticipate the time when she should be able to give a large piece of bread to every one who should ask charity at her gate. But this year she had seen the corn grow, ripen, and reaped down, with as much indifference as any town lady could do. About the beginning of autumn she, by imperceptible degrees, became more and more composed; her acute sorrow was changed into a gentle sadness, and she began to enjoy the blessing of returning health. Whoever saw her, most likely moved by her mourning and unaffected grief, declared she never looked so handsome as she did at that time; and it is possible that the excess of her sensibility might diffuse a charm over her whole being that it wanted before. Her large blue eyes, in which the tear of filial affection glistened, resembled a violet on which the moon reflects its beams, when damp with evening dew. The bloom of health again began to tinge her cheeks, but the colour was as faint as that of a rose

that has been violently compressed, and has just regained its freedom. Her voice penetrated its hearers hearts, like the modulated tones of a harp; every word expressed her feelings, and every look the thought that predominated in her mind: They were like the words and looks of friends at an approaching separation: And she approached, with hasty strides, a very painful separation, for she was going to bid an eternal adieu to the house that once was her father's. Six months the inevitable evil had sorely pressed her mind, nor could she ever reconcile herself to the thought of it. The time that they were to remove from the parsonage had long been fixed; but she felt as much attached to that loved abode as if it had been part of herself, and she fancied she should never be able to think herself at home any where else. But alas! her removal was as certain, and the thought of it as painful, as death.

The last day of her stay there at length arrived. It is happy for us, that most of the

the different disagreeable occurrences in life require some preparation, which, by engaging our attention, disperses our sorrow, and prevents its too intently fixing on the cause of it. This Louisa experienced, for she felt more composed the few last days that she was employed in preparing for their departure, and consulting with her mother about their future way of life, than she thought it possible for her to do.

At dinner the mother and daughter again talked over the plans they had formed for futurity. Early the next morning Louisa was to go to a neighbouring town, where they had hired a small lodging: a friend there had invited her to spend some days at her house; she had accepted the offer, and proposed remaining a week, during which time she was preparing the lodging for her mother's reception, who, in the mean time, was to clear the parsonage, and have it cleaned and got in order for the new curate, who was to officiate for the first time the next Sunday, and to take possession of the house the

the day before. A gentleman, a friend of her deceased husband, who lived in the village, had insisted on her and her son occupying an apartment in his house, as long as she chose: this she was to do for the ensuing week; at the expiration of it, Louisa was to return and fetch her mother to town.

The few morsels they swallowed were wetted with their tears, and as soon as the cloth was removed, the mother and daughter endeavoured to collect all the little fortitude and resolution they possessed, to enable them to support a scene that they had both long dreaded, but which could now no longer be deferred. It was to repeat, in a positive manner, to their old maid Martha, what they had often told her, without her regarding what they said, that their circumstances absolutely would not permit them to keep a servant, and that, painful as it was to themselves, they must part with her. As long as Louisa could remember, she had been accustomed to have the ho-

nest

nest industrious Martha about her, who she loved and esteemed as much as if she had been a near relation; nor was Martha, notwithstanding the homeliness of her person and meanness of her dress, undeserving of the affection that the whole family felt for her. May I be permitted in this place to erect a little monument in honour of this honest and upright servant? It is as unstudied and simple as the epitaph on a peasant's grave in a country church-yard, and will, I know, be as soon forgotten; but it is a tribute of gratitude I owe, and wish to pay to humble merit.

Martha had spent the greatest part of her life in the curate of Wellbury's service; she was young when she entered his family, and was now growing old apace; and during the number of years she had lived in it, she had accustomed herself to regard every thing she received as a gift, and what she did as a duty. Whatever happened to any part of the family, either good or bad, ... l to her to have befallen herself; and

the curate was very often obliged to comfort her, when he sustained a loss, either in his fields or amongst his cattle. She regarded her master as her brother, and his wife as her sister; but as she was the strongest and most used to labour, it was but right that she should work harder than they did. She used every thing that belonged to the family with as much care as if it had been her own, and as conscientiously as if wasting or purloining a straw would have ruined them. Their interest and her own were inseparably connected in her mind, for which reason she usually made use of the word *our*. The weak mind may, perhaps, feel his pride hurt by the familiarity of the expression, but those who make use of the reason that Heaven has bestowed on them, will feel, and gratefully acknowledge, the blessing of having servants of such a cast; for who can help loving those whose attachment to us is so sincere as to make our interest their own?

"Come in, my dear Martha," s

widow.

widow to her faithful attendant; "come in, I have something to say to you," and she endeavoured to dry her tears with her handkerchief as soon as she saw Martha, who auguring no good, entered the room with a sorrowful and averted face. "I must, Martha," continued she, "painful as the task is to myself, I must repeat what I have often told you, that—that it is not in my power to keep you any longer—you must—indeed you must leave me."

"Good God!" exclaimed Martha, clasping her hands in an agony, "why, surely, my dear mistress, you will not entirely abandon your poor old maid?"

"Abandon you!" replied the widow sobbing, "no, that I surely would not do, if there was a possibility of my keeping you. Oh, Martha, you little think how much pain the parting with you occasions me—do not, Oh, do not increase it! I have calculated our little income, which is so very small that it is utterly impossible for me to maintain you;

you; it is barely sufficient to keep me and my children."

"But," returned Martha, "my keeping will not cost much; I will eat but little." She took Louisa's hand, and pressed it between both her's as she spoke. "You know I shall not have much work, and therefore shall not require so much food as I have hitherto done, and I will drink nothing but water. We have enjoyed the good together, therefore let us bear the bad; I have eaten of your full dishes, nor will I leave you now they are empty. We have experienced fruitful years, and times of scarcity; we have christened children, and buried them; we have laughed and wept together, therefore we cannot part——no, 'tis impossible."

She paused a moment, and then turning to Louisa, continued—

"Do, dear Miss, beg of your mamma to keep me! dear, sweet Louisa, pray take me with you! look'ye, I have been five-and-

twenty

twenty years in this house, and I remember, as well as if it had happened yesterday, the joy we all felt when you was born. How often have I rocked your cradle, and lulled you to sleep in these arms, for I could quiet you when nobody else could! When you cried, I used to dance you in my arms, and sing *lullaby baby*, and *bye lulla bye*, as loud as I could; then you would be quiet, and fall asleep with your little head on my bosom, and that's the reason of my being so fond of you. It was I who learned you to walk and play at bo-peep; and it was the delight of my heart to see you grow so tall and pretty. I always thought," continued she, sobbing, "that I should remain with you as long as I lived, and that when I died you would have tied up a nosegay, and laid it in my coffin, and said to those who came to see me in it—That is poor old Martha, who nursed me when I was an infant."

Louisa held the old woman's hand, and tears

tears rolled in torrents down her cheeks. Martha seemed to reproach herself for the pain she had given her, and looked in a supplicating manner at her and her mistress.

"My dear Martha," said the latter, in a tremulous voice, and her words were often interrupted by sobs and tears, "do not add to my affliction, nor oppress my heart, which at this moment feels as if it would burst, still more than it already is. I assure you, if there was a possibility of my keeping you, I would do it with pleasure, but indeed—indeed I cannot!—Go to your brother, he is a widower, and has long wished to have you with him; and indeed you will be much more comfortably settled with him than you would be with us; but I solemnly promise you, that if ever our circumstances are better than they are at present, that you shall return to us, and that neither age nor infirmity shall prevent your doing so. In the mean time be assured, that I shall never forget your fidelity

and

and attachment to me and mine, nor ever cease esteeming you as one of the best and most faultless of mortals.

Louisa had seated herself on a chair whilst her mother was speaking, her elbow rested upon the table and supported her head, and streams of tears trickled down her cheeks, and were caught by the handkerchief she held in her hand. "Well, if it must be, it must," said Martha, sobbing; "forgive my vi—my—my violence." And she walked slowly towards the door.

"Stop a moment," said the widow. "You promised me yesterday that you would strive to find a master for poor old Rover; will you take him with you till you do so? do try to get a good master for him; I will give you something for his keeping till that time."

"Don't make yourself uneasy about him—I'll take care of him!" was her answer as she hurried out of the room, that she might give free vent to her tears.

"Must we part with every thing we

love?"

love?" said Louisa with a heavy sigh. "Surely, my dear mother, we can take the faithful dog, that has watched and guarded our house so many years, with us. He was a puppy when he was given to me; I was just ten years old at the time, and have had him nine years. Good God! what pleasure did the present give me at that time! it was perhaps greater than many feel when they inherit a dukedom. I nursed him when he was young, and fed him ever after—must I in future have no creature about me that I can be good to?—painful—painful thought!—how he used to jump and caper about me, or run after me when I went out—how attached he is to us all, and——"

She stopped suddenly, for, unwilling to renew her mother's sorrow, she did not chuse to say why she was so fond of him. The dog, who was remarkably attached to his master, had pined exceedingly when he died; till he was buried, he never moved from the side of his coffin, where he lay in a torpid kind of stupor, with his eyes continually

tinually fixed upon it. After the funeral he was missing, and was found, the day after, lying upon his master's grave, from whence he was with difficulty forced; and for several days after, he ran, as often as he could find means to escape from the house, to the same spot, where he howled and whined in a piteous manner.

"I think, with a little management, we might contrive to keep him," said Louisa.

"Only reflect on the inconvenience, my dear child," replied her mother, "that will attend our keeping so large a dog in a small room, in a narrow street in town. Besides," continued she with a sigh, "perhaps another would be glad to have the bread that we must give him;" and she looked sorrowfully at the little boy, who was eating a piece of bread at the time.

Louisa too well comprehended the meaning of her mother's words and looks; she hastily clasped her brother in her arms, folded him to her bosom, and exclaimed—

"Oh!

"Oh! yes, we must—we must give him away!"

"Don't hold me so fast, Louisa," said the child, as he struggled to get loose—"you hurt me—and see how wet you have made my face."

She went to the window and took up her knitting, which she so moistened with her tears, that she with difficulty moved the needles, which she did mechanically, without even knowing that she did so; for her thoughts were wandering, and lost in the retrospection of the happy days of childish pastimes and youthful joys. They were present to her mind's eye, and occasioned sensations similar to those an unfortunate lover must feel, whilst he is contemplating a picture of rural felicity, or reading one of Gessner's beautiful Idyls. The different scenes of the moving picture that shifted rapidly in her mind, were the little parlour she was sitting in, the garden that she saw from the window, the meadow at the end of the

the village, which in the spring was covered with primroses, daisies, and butterflowers, and the wood at the side of it, that seemed to terminate the prospect with a verdant crown.

It was in the two latter places that she and her friend Amelia, the Doctor's daughter, used to delight to play with their dolls and toys; and she recollected in the former how attentively she in winter used to watch the apples that were roasting by the fire, and how pleased she was when she heard them squeak.

Opposite to the fire-place stood a large old-fashioned deal table, on which the children's Christmas presents used to be laid. That brought to her mind how a table-cloth used to be spread over it on the eve of that day, and how impatiently she and her brothers and sisters (who all died young) used to wish for the next morning; how they used to listen whilst their parents were placing the gifts, and peep through the

MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S ...

the chinks of the door as soon as they saw the candles burn.

There was a shelf close to the window, on which she used to lay her books when she came home from school, and that reminded her of the profound respect she felt for her school-master, who, according to the ideas she then formed of rank, was, in her opinion, the first man in the world; her father followed, and then the doctor.

She and Amelia used to gather flowers in the garden, twine wreaths of them, and how often they blew away the tops of the marigold, and that they did not say whilst they were doing so—"how many years have I to live?" but "how many weeks is it to harvest—or to Christmas—or till Harriet comes from Mill-Hill?" Her busy fancy personified the different scenes of each season of the year—the happy years that were passed, and how perfectly well did she recollect the enlivening hope that cheered each mind in seed-time, and how delighted

delighted she used to be when she ran into the fields with Rover, to call her father to dinner ; the beauty of the fruit trees when in blossom, under which she and that tender parent used to love to wander; the bustle in the meadows when the hay was making, during which time she never, if she could possibly help it, failed being in them from first to last; the aromatic scent of the new-mown hay, and how pleased she was to roll about in the cocks when she was a child.

Then the harvest—How early they were obliged to rise at that time, and what a commotion the house was in ; for very often a heavy laden team drove into the yard before the first rays of the morning sun gilded the slated spire of the village church: the dance at harvest home, and all the joys that season produced. Then how busy they used to be, picking up the plumbs and pears when the trees were shaken ; and when the apples were gathered, how she used

used to jump about the baskets, and admire the beauty of them.

Various and never satiating as the pleasures that the changing seasons produced at Wellbury were, yet they were considerably heightened by two events that happened every year. In the spring Louisa accompanied her parents to Mill-Hill, a village about twenty miles from Wellbury, where they always paid an annual visit to her mother's brother, who lived there. The pleasure that this journey, and the company of her cousin Harriet, gave Louisa, was inexpressible; for the two girls were about the same age, and a similarity of disposition united their hearts in the closest bands of friendship. In the autumn the visit was returned, and Louisa counted the days and hours, when the time approached, till the family from Mill-Hill arrived. These events had afforded a greater variety to her calm and peaceful days, had occupied her thoughts, and interested her heart, more than the balls and tumultuous winter amuse-

ments

ments of the metropolis do the minds of the rich and dissipated. I am convinced that many elevated persons, who act distinguished and busy parts on the great stage of life, often wipe away a tear when they reflect on the innocent pleasures of their youthful days; although those whose taste is vitiated by luxury will find these I have just mentioned insipid—perhaps disgusting. I do not blame them, but I am certain Louisa was happier than they. This was the cause of the deep impression that the recollection of the past made upon her mind, and the agony that the retrospection caused her at the time I am describing.

Besides, the remembrance of former times must be doubly dear to her, on account of no action of her life having been marked by vice or folly. The sphere she had hitherto moved in was narrow and confined; those she was connected with were few, but they were good and virtuous, and want of experience made her suppose that all the world was the same. Bred up in a

small and remote village, under the eye of careful parents, who themselves practised the virtues they taught, she was a stranger to the vices that few escape being more or less infected with, who move in larger circles. Envy, for example, she thought a vice peculiar to fowls, because they pecked, and sought to rob each other when she strewed their corn; and cats and dogs she fancied were only addicted to rage and malice, because she had only seen them quarrel and fight.

Thus every event of that amiable girl's life was present to her mind; for sorrow on account of a recent loss, is an excellent remembrancer; and she recollected even the veriest trifles: How her eyes and thoughts used to wander about the church sometimes whilst her father was preaching; how she used to shew the strangers that visited them, the curiosities the village contained, the greatest of which was the decayed monument of an ancient knight, whose figure, clad in armour, and armed cap-a-pie, lay

upon

upon the top of it; and how she used to explain the almost defaced inscription that was engraven on the side of the stone to them.

These, and similar ideas, occupied her thoughts till the approach of evening, when suddenly recollecting herself, she hurried to take a sad, a last farewell of objects so dear to her, the most trifling of which appeared of immense value, as each served to recal some interesting remembrance to her mind; and she regarded them with a pang as painful, as a lover does an ornament he is possessed of, that was once wore by his deceased bride.

Long did her lingering steps wander about her father's room: It was there where, during his long illness, she had so assiduously attended him, where she had sat together whole hours by his bed-side, and where she every evening had been accustomed to water the pots of rose-trees and carnations that stood at the window. Her footsteps now resounded in the deserted apartment,

and the flowers that once bloomed so fresh and sweet were faded and decayed. The restless and afflicted mind loves to fly for relief to those places where it formerly enjoyed rest and comfort; but how much deeper is it wounded by finding them bereft of that object which once constituted its happiness! Thus Louisa left her father's room in speechless anguish, ran up stairs, and placed herself at the window where she used to watch the arrival of company from town, and particularly when the much-loved guests from Mill-Hill were expected. How many times had she hastened to that window on the morning of the day that was fixed for their coming, at so early an hour that it was impossible for them to be near; and still oftener, in the afternoon, where she would, when it began to grow late, remain whole hours, till she perceived the first glimpse of the long-expected carriage, when she used to hurry down in an ecstacy of joy, and exclaim—"They are coming! they are coming!"

and

and hasten with her father, who was waiting for her, to meet the beloved friends. Her eyes were fixed on the same spot, but her heart felt as oppressed as the youthful mariner's, the first time he beholds the unbounded ocean from the top-mast, and deeply sighing she withdrew them, and slightly traced the dull autumnal prospect.

She walked across the yard with a heavy heart; for the reflection of the lowing kine hastening to the meadow at the dawn of day, and returning heavy laden in the evening, and the harvest waggons, with creaking wheels, slowly moving along the yard to the barn door, accompanied her into the garden, where, alas! each tree reminded her of some past delight, and every bush of some of her innocent amusements. At every spot where she remembered she had seen a bird's-nest, a sensation of pity mixed with her sorrow, and every rose tree recalled to her mind a blissful scene.

With slow and unsteady steps, as if some

one restrained her, she passed through a small wicket gate there was in the garden, that opened into the church-yard. How many times had she sat under an elder tree that was in it, and contemplated this peaceful abode of the dead; how often had she, with her cousin and friend Amelia, read the verses and the names that were inscribed on the tombstones, and related to strangers the events that had lately happened in their village—perhaps the recent death of some country youth or maiden; the many walks she had taken there in moonlight evenings, when the pale beams of that orb reflected long shadows of the adjacent spire, and a solitary willow that stood in that hallowed spot; the cool and pleasant evenings of many a sultry summer's day that she passed with her parents there, and the involuntary dread she sometimes felt when walking over the rising graves; their improving conversation, the refreshing coolness of the air, and the gentle breeze that rustled the leaves of the trees, were all present to her imagination,

imagination, and the sight of her father's grave reminded her of all—all she had lost.

"Best—most beloved of parents," said she, clasping her hands in an agony of grief, "was the grave thy only inheritance here below?—alas! what else is the portion of mankind!—rest undisturbed in thy dark abode!—in that peaceful spot where I hoped my ashes would have mixed with thine!—farewell—oh! farewell for ever!—dearest father, may thy blessed spirit never be grieved by the knowledge of what thy unfortunate family suffers!—how they weep thy loss, and how forlorn and disconsolate they are!—forced to leave a place that contains all—all their souls hold dear!—alas! they have no longer a habitation in it—not even a grave!—perhaps ours will be far—far from thine, amongst strangers in a foreign land!"

With a trembling hand, as if she was committing a sacrilege, she gathered a sprig of wormwood that grew upon the grave, and pressed it to her palpitating heart. She

then reluctantly tore herself from the spot, and returned home, with such hasty steps, as if she thought the quickness of her motion would lessen the anguish of her mind; but she often stopped as she walked, and looked back. It seemed as if her attachment to every thing she saw was increased since she passed it before; she waved her hand, as if bidding them an eternal farewell; and the form of every object was so deeply impressed on her memory, as to bid defiance to either time or absence to obliterate, or lessen the effect it then had on her mind.

Early the next morning, Louisa went to town with a country woman, but her heart was as heavy and her mind as agitated as if she going to prison.

The week she spent in town passed better than one would have expected; for the bustle she was in, in preparing their future abode, and getting it in readiness for her mother, engaged her thoughts and occupied her time; but she never looked out of the small window into the narrow dirty street,

without

without sorrow and disgust; for the contrast between that, and the fine extensive prospect that her casement, darkened with jasmine, at Wellbury, commanded, was great indeed.

The mother, in the meanwhile, settled her accounts with the new curate, who took possession of the house. She had reason to be satisfied with him; for his proceedings, with regard to her, were not merely just, they were generous. She and her son occupied the apartment their friend had offered them, and Martha and Rover were removed to her brother's thatched cottage, where she impatiently waited for the next Sunday, which was to be a day big with events, for in the morning the new curate was to preach, and in the evening Louisa was to return from town.

She did so at the appointed time; but the sensations she felt at again beholding her much-loved village, and why she did not chuse the nearest way through it to go to her mother, as she must then have

passed by the front of the parsonage, are too obvious to need mentioning. She turned down a lane at the side of it, that lay between two gardens, and when near the house, she stood still and listened, with a timid downcast look, if any noise proceeded from it.

All was silent—for the curate and the company that had dined and were to spend the evening with him, were gone a-walking, and the only sound she heard, was the chirping of a well-known cricket, which had long lived undisturbed in that spot. "Happy creature!" thought Louisa, "thou art not forced from thy native home!" and she hurried as fast as her trembling feet would permit, to the friend's house where her mother was.

She was received with as much joy as if she had been absent a year. Her mother related to her how advantageously she had disposed of her effects to the new curate, and how disinterestedly he had acted. —Louisa, in return, gave a circumstantial

tial account of what she had done in town, which met with her mother's entire approbation. Louisa often turned round, whilst she was speaking, like one who is looking for something. Alas! her eyes wandered in search of Martha, and she, several times, was very near calling Rover. Martha was at the Parsonage, where she was engaged to assist the maid for a few days, and the dog was at her brother's cottage.

As the moon shone uncommonly bright, Louisa could not resist the temptation of taking a solitary walk round the village, and she advanced, with timid steps, towards the cot where her faithful guard and constant companion in her evening walks was.

As she approached the house, she heard him whine, for he was in the yard, and had discovered her at a distance through the pales. She drew up the wooden latch as gently as she could, and, beside himself with joy, the dog first jumped against her, then rolled himself upon the ground, and humbly crouching at her feet, seemed to

enquire why she had left him, and to beg she would take him with her now; at least Louisa fancied those were the expressions that his gestures denoted, and she kindly patted him, and stroaked his head.

Accompanied by the dog, who continued to bark and run round her with frantic joy, she at last summoned up resolution enough to walk past the front of the parsonage. Although she was at some distance, she perceived that several candles were burning in the lower apartment, which terrified her as much as if she had again seen her father in his coffin, and the lights standing by the side of it. She approached a little nearer, and heard the ringing of glasses: she shuddered, for to her the sound seemed to be a funeral knell. The new curate, a few of his town friends, the justice of peace, and some of the principal inhabitants of the village, were drinking a bowl of punch together, and just as Louisa passed by the house, the health of his intended was given. The curate accepted the toast, the glasses were

were filled, and pushed together, and he—thought of a pretty girl in town.

Louisa's mind was too much agitated to allow her to receive much pleasure from her walk; she therefore soon returned home, and went to bed early, but could not sleep the whole night.

The three following days passed as dully as the first evening. Martha's calling now and then, and by her well-meant prattle, which was often interrupted by her tears, sometimes beguiling away a tedious hour, was the only variation there was in them. Every evening Louisa went, with timid steps, as if afraid of being seen, (thou hadst no cause to be ashamed of thy feelings, dear girl,) to the labourer's cottage; she first listened at the gate, if any body was in the yard, and then drew up the leather thong, as gently as possible, to prevent the door from creeking. Rover, who was always in waiting, ran to meet her with boisterous joy; he first jumped, then sprawled on the ground, and wagging his tail, he

kept

kept close to her side, and attended her through the narrow street that led to her old favourite walk.

The last of the three days, she went out rather earlier than she had done the former ones, and the walk she chose was that her father used to take every day when the weather permitted. It was a large meadow that lay near the road; that side of it was shaded by poplars, and the others by long rows of fruit-trees, and sloe and hawthorn hedges. There, in the spring and summer, their frugal supper was often carried, and there she used to sit with her father, and contemplate the works of nature. O! how he used to admire pure and uncorrupted nature!—How beautiful the prospect was at the latter end of autumn, when the cold nights first came on, to see the trees and hedges, and particularly the curled leaves of the young elms, covered with hoar frost! How flowery and feathered the white rime used to appear on them, as fragile and curious as if composed of silver dust, and formed

formed by the hand of enchantment. But alas! Louisa had neither autumn nor spring to enjoy here more, and it seemed to her as if every beauty that had heretofore bloomed in that dear spot, would soon be buried for ever, and that the ruthless hand of death had already seized hold of them.

The ground was strewed with whitish stubble, and variegated leaves, over which the industrious spider had drawn its fine and shining web; the hedges retained but little of their verdant beauty; they were thin, and would have been silent, if it had not been for the chirping of a few forsaken Robin Redbreasts; and one would have thought that the poplars, that were late so flourishing, were in a state of decay, if a few of their outer leaves had not been green. The rest of the trees were composed of a variety of colours, russet, yellow, green, and red; and the bleak frosty air rustled through the branches, as if it had been a gentle shower of rain.

"Nature mourns my loss with me!" thought

thought Louisa; and she returned homeward sooner than she intended doing when she went out.

She opened the gate to let the dog in, but she had some difficulty to make him leave her, for he fawned on her that evening more than usual, and she could not prevail on herself to return his caresses with harshness. Whilst she was thus engaged, Martha, who had been home to fetch something, and was just going to return to the parsonage, met her. Louisa related to her the agonizing sensations she had felt during her walk; for her heart was full, and she was glad to find a person to unburden her mind to, and whose feelings she knew sympathized with her own. She again recommended the dog to Martha's care, and then went home.

Martha met the curate's sister, who was to keep her brother's house for some time, in the passage near the door of the room where he was sitting: Her head was full of her young mistress; it is therefore no wonder

der that she immediately began to talk about her, which she did in terms of commendation that might have appeared extravagant to a stranger, if Martha's open honest countenance had not vouched for the truth of her expressions. Among the rest, she related Louisa's attachment to the dog, and concluded with saying—"He is a faithful trusty animal; I wish you would take him—he will be useful to you; and my dear young mistress will have a care less."

"I have spoken to my brother about him already," was the answer that Martha received; "you may bring him when you please."

Martha, highly delighted at having executed her commission so well, ran as fast as she could to inform Louisa of her success, and to fetch the dog, and the young lady went into the room where her brother was reading.

The door had stood open whilst his sister and Martha were talking, and he had not lost a word of the discourse; for attentive

as

as he seemed to be to the book he held in his hand, his eyes had been fixed on the open page above an hour, without his knowing what that page contained, or what the subject of the book was, so entirely did the lovely female he had once seen in town engross his thoughts; her form and features were present to his mind's eye, and he was endeavouring to recollect on what kind of a chair she sat.

"Louisa must really be an amiable girl," was the reply he made to his sister's repetition of what Martha had just said to her—"Every person I have spoken to praises her as much as the old maid does—have you seen her yet?" and he continued, without waiting for her answer—"Her affection for the dog pleases me much; I must endeavour to see the gentle Louisa before she goes to town—Oh! that the girl I love may possess as benevolent a heart, and as mild a disposition as she does!—But she certainly does, and so you will say, sister, when you see her. Her large blue eyes look like dew-

besprinkled

besprinkled corn-flowers tied up in a nosegay of lilies, and a blue eye never deceives. The serenity of her brow, that was gently shaded by natural ringlets of flaxen hair, must proceed from the uncorrupted innocence of her mind; and it was sensibility alone, that diffused its irresistible charm on her whole countenance. Her cheeks were rather pale; yet a gentle mixture of red was happily blended with the dazzling whiteness of her complexion, and lost itself as imperceptibly as the first shade in a new-blown anemony; and—and——"

"Stop!—for Heaven's sake, stop, brother!" said his sister interupting him, "you have repeated this to me twenty times, and it would be infinitely more entertaining, if you could tell me something new about her."

"It is my misfortune," replied he, "not to be able to do so; but is the fault mine? You know, Lucy, that my being placed here was sudden and unexpected, and the short time I have been at Wellbury, I have been

so much engaged as not to be able to call two hours of the day my own; but I intend to get up very early to-morrow morning, and go to town as soon as it is day-light. Perhaps by this time to-morrow I may be the happiest of men; for she blushed, sister, when her eyes met mine; and once, when she did not think I observed her, she looked at me, and her countenance did not express any signs of dislike."

"Really!" said his sister smiling; "but she may be married, or at least engaged, for any thing you know."

"Married!—or engaged!" exclaimed the curate— "God forbid!—but no!—no!—she certainly is neither; she did not look as if she was. It was late last Friday evening when I called on Mrs. Smith, to deliver your message to her; how early I should have gone, if I had thought of finding such a treasure there! She sat at the window at work; I wish you had seen her, for I never saw any body work so fast in my life. The first question I asked my cousin,

cousin, when I returned home, was the name of the charming girl I had seen at Mrs. Smith's?

'The girl is pretty enough,' replied she, in a cold phlegmatic manner, that put me out of patience; 'but her beauty is her only portion. Her mother died some time ago, and Mrs. Smith, who is a distant relation of her's, has taken her out of charity—I don't know her name.'

"This was all the information she could give me, but I hope I shall gain more to-morrow: and now, as I have half an hour to spare, I'll go and pay the widow a visit, for I have still some accounts to settle with her; besides, I should be glad to see Louisa; perhaps, as she is lately come from town, she may be able to give me some tidings of my fair incognita. You know I can enquire if she is acquainted with Mrs. Smith, and the like, without her being able to guess the reason of my doing so. Who knows if I may not be fortunate enough to gain some intelligence of her."

The

The curate got up, and taking his hat as he pronounced the last words, left the room to put his design into execution. He met Martha and Rover at the street door— "Poor fellow!" said he to the latter, as he patted his head; the dog wagged his tail, but instead of fawning on him, he ran into the house, and then about the yard and garden, as if he was anxiously seeking for something. The young man's eyes followed the faithful animal; he repeated, "poor fellow!" and then walked on.

In the mean time the moon was risen, and Louisa, and her friend Amelia, who had called on her, stood at the window; they were alone, for the mother was gone to call on a neighbour, and had taken the little boy along with her. Louisa's arm rested on her friend's shoulder, who was relating to her all the little events that had happened in the village during the time she had been in town.

Louisa listened to what she said without interrupting her, and her eyes remained fixed on

on the same spot. Amelia talked a good deal about the new curate; said her parents had paid him, and his sister, a visit the day before, and that they could not enough commend his politeness and learning. She likewise, with the familiarity of ancient friendship, added what report said about him, and the elegance of the furniture he had brought from town with him, and what was still to come; and that his maid had told their's, in confidence, that her master was in love with a young lady in town, but she did not know her name; that he had a small independent fortune, besides his living; that he had preached an excellent sermon the Sunday before; and that every body seemed satisfied with him.

Amelia's last words brought tears into Louisa's eyes; the idea of her father returned fresh to her mind, and she stood as immoveable as a statue, till roused from her reverie by Amelia's saying—

"What are you thinking about?"

"Alas! on past events," replied Louisa, "and

"and my approaching separation from objects so dear to me. Do you see the turning in the road, near the wood, Amelia? that was the way we took when we went to Mill-Hill. We always set off for that place, early on the morning of Whitsun-Tuesday, and staid there a week. I remember, as well as if it had only happened a day ago, how the morning dew shone, and dropped from the ears of corn, when we drove away. We always stopped and dined with a friend of my father's, who lives in a village ten miles from here, which we used to call our half-way house; and the garden, the green bank, and sedgy fish-pond, where I used to gather yellow broom, and blue brooklime, with his children, are at this moment present to my imagination; as is the joy we felt when we came within sight of Mill-Hill, and saw Harriet and her brother running to meet us. The last time we were there, she jumpt unexpectedly from behind a hedge, and came up to our carriage, quite out of breath. I leaped out of it, and how tenderly we embraced

embraced each other: Her parents soon followed her, and what a hearty welcome we received.

Our first business, when we arrived at the farm, was to run through every room, visit the gardens, fields, and each favourite spot, where we never failed remarking the most trifling alterations that had been made since we were there last, and enquiring the reason of them. Every day we spent there was a holiday; and I can relate to you, for hours together, the pleasures we enjoyed, without enumerating them all. To be sure the parting was painful, and cost us many tears; but the thought of soon meeting again comforted us; and that time was not very distant, for in the autumn they came to us. How did I use to count the weeks, days, and at last hours, till that time arrived! Happy, happy time! how blessed was I then!—It is just a year since I saw them last—they were here in October; the weather was remarka-

bly fine, and we enjoyed pleasure with an avidity as if something told us to make much of the present time, as the comforts it afforded would return no more. Look, Amelia—there, at that bush, I took leave of Harriet; we always cried when we parted, but never did our tears flow so abundantly, nor with so much bitterness. 'Farewell Louisa! farewell dear village!' said she, waving her hand; but she little thought, at the time, that she was bidding, it perhaps, an eternal adieu! she stepped into the carriage with eyes red and swollen with weeping, and my parents, as well as her's, were more affected than they had ever been before. The carriage was soon out of sight. I returned home with a heavy heart, and long did I remember Harriet's last words, which I often repeated after her—'Farewell, dear village!' Little did I then think, that a year after, I should be forced to say so in earnest; and yet how soon—how very soon, must I say—'Farewell, dear—dear village—

farewell

farewell for ever!' How many tears has this loved spot already cost me, and how many will it still occasion!

One of the evenings I was in town, I took a walk, and I am certain I heard the distant sound of Wellbury evening bells. Oh! I knew them too well to be mistaken! and, Amelia, I cannot express to you what my heart suffered at that moment! I felt like a person who is confined in a dungeon, and hears the well-known voice of a friend passing by. Harriet, and Mill-Hill, I shall probably never see again: I know they will never forget us, as many do their poor relations; but they will not come to us, for fear of encreasing our expences, and we cannot afford to pay for a carriage to go to them. Have not I lost a great deal, Amelia? My dear mother is the only comfort I have left: Oh! may it long be continued to me! Look how bright the moon shines through the branches of the lime tree on my father's grave!—and see how it reflects on our late habitation! It is not in

my power to tell you how well I love that house, and yet I was forced to leave it, and shall soon be obliged to leave the village entirely. I used to think I should never remove from it, for I am sure I am not fit to live in a town, nor can a town ever have any charms for me. A country life is what I always loved, and wished might be my fate; and I feel as much attached to this place, as the domestic swallow does to his clay-built nest, which it would not exchange for a gilt and ornamented cage; and yet, Amelia, in a few days I must say— 'Farewell, dear village!"

The curate entered the room at the moment Louisa pronounced the last words: He had knocked at the door twice, but as the two girls minds were too much engaged to hear him, he opened the door; but he started back with astonishment, the moment they turned round, and he saw their faces. He stood as if he was petrified, and yet the amazement his looks expressed did not seem to be occasioned by any thing disagreeable, for

for they denoted surprise and joy; and Louisa fancied he was in love with Amelia, and Amelia thought the same of Louisa.

The young man at last summoned up resolution enough to address himself to Louisa, and said, in a hesitating manner—"I think, madam, if I am not mistaken, that you are the lady I had the pleasure of seeing at Mrs. Smith's last Friday? how happy I am to meet you here!"

Louisa replied in the affirmative, and her cheeks were tinged with a deeper red than when she first saw him; nor had she ever felt so violently agitated, whilst speaking to any person, before.

"I believe, Madam, you are a relation of Mrs. Smith, and have lived with her some time?" said the curate.

"No, Sir," stammered Louisa, "I find you take me for another. I——"

"Take you for another!—impossible!—I am certain you are the lady I saw at Mrs. Smith's. I immediately enquired who you was, and a friend of

of mine told me you was a relation of her's."

"I can now account for the mistake," replied Louisa. "I called on the young person you mention, but did not find her at home. The maid told me that she would not stay long, which induced me, as I had my work with me, to wait till she returned, and that was the reason of your finding me alone there, and mistaking me for her."

"Thank God!" exclaimed the curate.

The two girls looked at each other and smiled, for they did not know what to make of him: and he, afraid of discovering his joy still more, spoke but little till the mother returned, which she luckily did soon after. The conversation then took a different turn, as it was changed to the accounts they had to settle together. Amelia went home, and the mother secretly rejoiced at the attentions that the young curate paid her daughter; for she must have been blind indeed, if she had not seen that his eyes were oftener fixed on Louisa than on

on the papers that lay on the table before him, nor did he look like a person who was casting up accounts.

"I have found her, Lucy! I am the happiest man in the world!" were the words with which he addressed himself to his sister, at his return to the parsonage; and he enquired about Rover, and if he was properly taken care of, with as much earnestness as he would after a treasure that had been entrusted to his care.

He did not go to town the next morning, but he went to the widow's as soon as propriety would admit. His visit was repeated in the afternoon, and again the next morning; for every time he looked over the accounts he found a fresh mistake in them. To be sure, it was rather odd that every error he discovered was to the widow's advantage; but the consequence of his rigid punctuality was his having frequent opportunities of assuring himself of Louisa's affection; and as soon as he was convinced that he was not indifferent to

 her,

her, an application in form was made to the mother, and—to make as short of this long story as possible, the marriage took place that winter.

Her uncle and his family came to the wedding; and, to add to her happiness, her cousin Harriet was bride to a worthy and wealthy young man, who only lived five miles from Wellbury. Louisa is again comfortably settled in her much-loved village, and in her dear paternal habitation; her husband spares neither pains nor expence in her brother's education, who promises to be an amiable youth; and her mother enjoys all the happiness that dutiful and affectionate children can bestow. Honest Martha is again at the parsonage; and once a-year a visit to Mill-Hill, in company with Harriet and her husband, and those friends returning the visit, affords a pleasing variety to the simple, but blissful, domestic joys of Wellbury.

Three years have passed in this manner. I met Martha the other day, in my morning

ing walk, coming from Wellbury, and asked her how the family did?—

"We are all well," said she, "and as happy as the angels in Heaven!—and we shall soon have another child!"

The old dog is still alive.

THE PERPLEXITIES.

GOODWIN TO HIS FRIEND.

"I WILL endeavour to describe to you, my dear Parker, as well as I am able, the ridiculous events of yesterday afternoon and evening, in which I passed five hours in the agony and perturbation of spirit that we suppose a fish feels when it is out of water. They were the first (and, I hope, will be the last) hours I spent at Court; and the thought that a night of undisturbed repose has passed since the uneasiness I then endured, makes me feel as light and easy as one who has just dis-

charged a debt of long standing to a troublesome creditor.

"O sleep! how great—how benign is thy power over mortals! With what ease canst thou restore composure to the ruffled mind, smooth its roughest, and brighten its darkest prospects! How gently dost thou lull the agitated heart into the tranquil state that was disturbed by unexpected incidents! and how quickly doth thy lenient hand restore us to ourselves again, obliterate every painful recollection of our former agitation, (if the cause of it did not proceed from within), enablest us to stand as upright as a healthy tree after a storm, and recount, and laugh at our former embarrassments, with the same ease as we should relate and smile at a troublesome dream! I thank Heaven that I am at present able to do so, and I will strive to inform you of my late adventures, and the pleasure I feel at being myself again today, (for I yesterday, at times, fancied myself the most helpless and aukward being

 that

that ever existed), with the openness and impartiality as if I was speaking of an indifferent person. I have long been a letter in your debt, and I wish this may make you amends for my long silence. Laugh at me as much as you please, and be assured that you cannot do so more than I have done at myself.

"My attachment to my old friend, Thompson, at Henningstone, and my extreme partiality for the plain, but heartfelt enjoyments his house affords, are well known to you. His estate is situated near the town, and the various beautiful views that his upper windows command, his neat farm-yard, well stored with all kinds of poultry, the various implements of rural labour, and his lowing well-fed cattle, are objects that I always greatly admire; but what pleases me best of all is the domestic happiness my friend enjoys, the smile of content that is painted on every countenance, and his and his wife's industry and hospitality; the latter of which would

always tempt me to think myself at home at their house, if their polite attentions, and constant study to oblige, did not frequently make me feel myself both their guest and debtor. I, therefore, whenever my affairs will permit, with pleasure accept of Thompson's annual invitation, and usually spend a week at his house every spring or summer.

"My journey, the day before yesterday, was as agreeable as a fine day, good roads, and a contented mind, could make it. I arrived at Henningstone without meeting with any accident, and was received by my friend and his wife with their usual cordiality. The evening was spent in interesting enquiries, pleasing relations, and reciprocal assurances of the satisfaction that the expectation of spending a whole week as happily as that evening gave us: but, as Thompson says, "tares will spring up with the finest wheat." He certainly is in the right, and I was in the wrong to expect a week of unruffled felicity.

"Yesterday

"Yesterday morning the Duke's private secretary came with a message from his Highness to my friend; and as soon as his business was over, Thompson brought him into the parlour, where his wife and I were sitting, and introduced me to him. As soon as the stranger heard my name and place of abode mentioned, he enquired if he had the honour of speaking with the author of several moral treatises, and a book of devotion that he named? And, on my replying in the affirmative, he politely commended my works, said the Duke had read them, and that they met with his entire approbation.

"The conversation then became general till he went away, and when he took leave, he assured me, with great volubility, that he esteemed himself very fortunate in having made such a valuable acquaintance that morning; and that if it was ever in his power to be any ways useful to me, he begged I would ommand his services without reserve. I regarded his professions of

of friendship as words of course, and forgot both them and him as soon as he was out of sight.

"But, to my no small surprise, a note from my new friend was brought to me whilst I was at dinner, in which he informed me that he had told the Duke of my being at Mr. Thompson's, and that his Highness wished to see me. He, therefore, desired me to come to him at four o'clock, that he might present me to him, and added, that the porter would shew me the way to his room. I had above an hour's time to dress and prepare myself for the part I was going to act. As a man of learning, and one who was entirely independant, I determined to deliver my sentiments with modest freedom, assume an air of graceful dignity, preserve the equanimity of my mind, and not suffer myself to be dazzled by the glare of royalty.

"I intended to avoid contradicting the Duke as much as was in my power, and equally resolved to assert my opinion, with

the same ease and frankness as if I was speaking to an equal. That he would mention my literary productions was certain; that subject would afford me a desirable opportunity of making several learned and interesting observations, which I carefully recorded in my mind; and they would insensibly lead to a train of instructive and amusing ideas, with which I determined to entertain the Duke, and in a manner repay him for his kind attentions to me. I had finished my dress before I had settled my plan of operations, although the care with which I curled and powdered my hair, brushed my cloaths, and adjusted every part of my dress, had required a considerable time. Thus adorned, I began my peregrination with such hasty strides, that my friend's eldest son, a rosy-cheeked boy, who had offered to shew me the way to the palace, could hardly keep pace with me.

"My curiosity to know what would happen in a sphere that was entirely new to me,

me, and, to own the truth, some movements of vanity, that the hope of appearing to advantage in it excited, were not powerful enough to suppress a certain uncomfortable and confused idea of my mind's not being quite at its ease, although I would not own to myself that that was the case: but it certainly was, and my whole being was as much out of its place as the hat that I held in my hand, that it might not disorder my hair, was.

"I unfortunately fancied that there was an aukwardness in my gait, as well as in the manner of carrying my hat; and my attention to myself, and endeavours to assume an easier air, gave me an appearance of pedantry and affectation that, I believe, is not natural to me. I looked like a lad who is strutting about in a new suit of cloaths; and even my little guide discovered (probably by my answers to his questions being shorter than usual) that I was not quite the same person who had walked out with him in the morning. He told

me

me as we went along, that the boys at school were obliged to make orations twice a-year, to accustom them to speak in public, and that the last time he had rehearsed a fable. The reason of his telling it to me did not strike me at the time, but it occurred to me afterwards, that I probably appeared to him, as fine, as stiff, and as anxious to gain applause, as he felt when he was going to mount the rostrum.

"In this manner we arrived at the Palace gate. 'You must go in there,' said the friendly lad, pointing to it, and running back. The enquiries of the sentry, who I was, and what I wanted? before he would allow me to enter; and the porter's interrogations, before I had time to desire him to conduct me to my new friend, confused me a good deal; for, immaterial as the questions they asked were, and easily answered, yet they flurried my spirits, and made me feel the uncomfortable sensation of being out of my own element, in which I could come and go unquestioned, as every one

one knew who I was. I, therefore, when shewn into the secretary's room, found myself less composed, and less eloquent than I was an hour before.

"The man was buried in papers, and informed me that some unexpected business, that he was obliged to dispatch immediately, prevented his having the pleasure of entertaining me till the Duke could see me; but that he would conduct me to two noblemen, whose names he mentioned, that wished to be acquainted with me, and that he had not a doubt of my spending my time very agreeably with them till the Duke sent for me, which be believed would be in about an hour. He desired me to follow him, without giving me time to recover from the surprise his unexpected reception had thrown me into, or even to answer him, ran down stairs, opened a room-door, mentioned my name in a hasty manner, and immediately disappeared.

"The magnificence of the apartment, the beauty of the hangings and ceiling, the

the number of ornaments, and the richness of the furniture, confused me, as I had not time to regard them distinctly; and my perplexity was increased by the extreme civility of the two strange gentlemen (one was old and the other young), and their frequently saying the politest things at the same time, to which I could only reply with a humble, and, I believe, clumsy bow. Another vexatious circumstance was, that I had entirely forgotten their names and long titles; and the fear of their thinking me familiar or impertinent, if I only said Sir, greatly increased my ridiculous distress.

"Oh, that those who are placed in the higher ranks of life possessed humanity and perspicuity enough not to judge too harshly of their inferiors, who happen to be thrown among them sometimes for an hour or two, because they appear a little aukward, unpolished, and unentertaining; or if the customs seem as strange to them, as the etiquette that is observed at the Emperor of China's court, would appear

to

to the most polished courtier, if he was suddenly transplanted from a German Prince's to that of Pekin! Something of this kind darted confusedly through my head, whilst the gentlemen were surveying me with curious eyes; but that reflection was far from tranquillizing me, for I, perhaps unjustly, fancied that their want of feeling would not suffer them to think as I did. Their frigidity formed such a contrast to my warmth, and their composure to my uneasiness, that my disgust increased every moment, and with it my taciturnity and reserve. I endeavoured to collect myself once or twice, but failed in every attempt; for whatever I said, even when I was convinced of its propriety, seemed to me, as I pronounced it with hesitation, either affected or rude, pedantic or frivolous: that made me dissatisfied with myself, and when we are so, we are utterly incapable of pleasing others.

'You are probably an admirer of fine prospects?' said the young gentleman. He opened

opened the window as he spoke, made a motion with his hand for me to approach it, and stepped back, to make way for me, with a look of indifference.

"Had I been left alone a quarter of an hour, or (what would have been still more desirable) in your company that space of time, I should have recovered myself, and thought and acted in my usual manner. The view was enchantingly beautiful, and thawed, although only for a moment, my frozen mind—an extensive prospect, that enclosed some towns and several villages, with their domains, majestic mountains, covered with dark groves on one side, and on the other fields and meadows, decked in the gay and variegated attire of summer, and striped with different hues of pleasing colours; just under the window, the Duke's elegant garden, in which nature was so happily assisted by art, that the improving hand of the latter was hardly perceptible; and the *tout ensemble* formed the most picturesque scene that can well be imagined.

The river gently flowed along one side of the garden, then meandered through a grove, and at last formed an extensive angle, that encompassed part of the town; and the busy bustle that was visible in the town amused my mind, which at the same time was lulled into a pleasing melancholy by the various lights the whole prospect appeared in; for one side of it glittered in sunshine, whilst the other was covered with an awful gloom, that was caused by the dark clouds that were gathering in the west, and between both long streaks of light and shade were to be seen.

"I turned round to the room with a head full of confused ideas. The two gentlemen were standing near the fire-place, and looking at some figures in bass-relief that were over it. It did not strike me at the moment that persons to whom the prospect was familiar, could not admire its beauty with the rapture I did; but my warmth, and perhaps the secret wish to prove to them that I was not devoid of sensibility,

sensibility, made me express myself in terms that I felt the impropriety of, the moment I had uttered them. 'Good God!' exclaimed I, 'is it possible for any heart to be cold and unfeeling enough to view such a prospect as this with indifference!—those who can, are, in my opinion, objects of pity.'

"The eldest of my companions looked at me with contracted eyebrows, as if he was curious to know if any still greater absurdity would follow; the other smiled; and I stood as much out of countenance as a child that has just broke a glass. That was foolish, very foolish indeed, thought I, and I felt as if I ought to make an apology for my seeming rudeness. I stammered something that was intended to circumscribe my former unlimited assertion, which, as well as I am able to recollect, was not much wiser than what I said before; and I felt so depressed, and so much out of humour with myself, that I was not able to turn my eyes towards the window, nor to look at the

the prospect, the fatal cause of my present confusion, again, which must have made the gentlemen fancy my former violent admiration either affected, or very transient. They, however, did all in their power to keep up the conversation, and asked me a number of questions about the village I lived in, and my house, garden, and family—subjects that were totally indifferent to them; nor would they probably have made any enquiries of the kind, if they had not seen, and wished to relieve, my distress.

"My replies were frequently incoherent and foreign to the purpose; and I once so entirely forgot myself, that I talked about my neighbour, John Morris, with a prolixity as if the man had been their cousin. I then recollected that I was tedious, and, to avoid that fault, ran into the contrary extreme; for my answers were so short and unconnected, that I am certain I must have been utterly unintelligible to them. In short, I every moment committed some

fresh blunder, and my endeavours to repair my fault never failed leading me into new ones. My thoughts continually wandered from the society of strangers I was in, to that of my old acquaintance, and from the Duke's palace to my own village; it was, therefore, an impossibility for me to be entertained, or entertaining.

"This company does not suit me!—was a thought that frequently started into my mind; but I now perceive how much I was in the wrong, and that the noblemen were quite in the right if they said, as soon as my back was turned—this man does not suit us! for it was I alone who was in fault.

"Our mutual reserve increased; and the conversation at last became so insipid and trifling, that the monosyllables in which it chiefly consisted, seemed to be rather an attempt to conceal a yawn, and keep ourselves awake, than any thing else.

"One of the gentlemen fixed his eyes upon a picture, and the other walked slowly

up

up and down the room, and adjusted his cravat or the frill of his shirt, although they were both in the nicest order; and my looks were rivetted on the dark clouds (those emblems of my mind) that were gathering in the sky, with inward discontent; and I wished myself at home, or at my friend Thompson's.

"If the communication of ideas cannot unite the minds of men, who knows if a pinch of snuff may not be able to do so! —were probably the walking gentleman's thoughts when he presented his box to me. My refusal was accompanied with a profound bow; but at that very instant the thought darted like lightning across my mind, that there was a possibility of his misconstruing my declining his offer into an offence, and made me stretch out my hand to accept it.

"He had shut his snuff-box, but opened it again, and offered it to me. I had in the meanwhile withdrawn my hand. I bowed just as I had done before, and raised my

hand the second time, exactly in the same manner as I had done the first, at the moment he drew his back. He made another attempt, I did the same, but neither of us succeeded; and the ridiculous motion of our hands was a striking picture of our vain endeavours to entertain and be useful to each other; for each of us wished to do so, but neither of us could devise the proper means of doing what he intended.

"Nor did I even succeed in my attempt to attain the pinch of snuff; for whilst the old gentleman and I were engaged in the manner just described, a servant entered, and informed me that the Duke desired I would come to him. I felt like a young parson who hears the bells ring for church the first time he is going to preach, and followed the footman with a palpitating heart, and the renewed determination to act and speak with becoming courage and presence of mind. Perhaps I should have succeeded in doing so, for the Duke's affable, humane countenance inspired me with confidence

confidence as well as respect, if I had not stumbled, and nearly fallen on the dry-rubbed floor of the room the Duke was in, the moment I set my foot upon it.

'Take care how you walk,' said the Duke, 'for the floor is slippery.' I unfortunately at that moment remembered the resolution I had formed of speaking my mind freely and without reserve, and therefore replied, without the least hesitation—'Your Highness is perfectly in the right. Courts are generally slippery places!'

'That may be,' returned the Duke, without seeming to notice the true meaning of my words; 'but it is not my fault; it is my servants who polish the boards, and custom enables us to walk on them without stumbling.'

"This answer, and the apprehension I justly felt that he might think what I had said trite and rude, threw me into a panic; and I was as confused as an actor who forgets himself in the midst of his part, and felt

felt just as stupid and aukward as I had done in the other room.

'You are the author of several excellent performances?' continued the Duke, after a pause.

'Yes, your Highness,' replied I, with a low bow. The Duke smiled.

"That was foolish of me again, said I to myself; but I did not intend to say what I had written was excellent, I only meant to avow myself the author of them. Had I been less embarrassed than I really was at the time, I should have found it rather difficult to give the Duke a proper answer to what he said; for a good deal of keenness is necessary to enable a person, who is speaking to a stranger, and one who is greatly his superior, to give a proper reply to a question which we must assent and deny at the same time. My courage and firmness entirely forsook me, and all my efforts to regain my usual equanimity proved ineffectual; nor was it in my power

to

to utter one of the many sentences that I had framed with so much care and reflection in my own mind, whilst I was dressing.

"I then set it down as a certainty that the Duke would name my book of devotion, which would give me an opportunity of making several moral and religious observations; and to them I meant to annex, as the first step towards the improvement of the minds of the lower classes of people, an amendment in the public and charity schools. But the Duke did not make the least mention of that work, and instead of doing so, enquired, with seeming interest, if I did not soon intend to publish something new? That question led me into the same error that I had so lately committed; for I was sometimes too circumstantial, and at others too concise.

"At one moment I mentioned every circumstance relating to my next publication, with as much precision as if I was talking to the editor; and then recollecting myself that doing so was improper, I the

next minute spoke of my manuscript in such general terms as if the Duke had copied it.

"This inconsistency in my behaviour, and some ill-chosen expressions, as well as two or three familiar terms that escaped me, and which I unfortunately felt the impropriety of the moment I had uttered them, increased my confusion. I am certain my face must have glowed as if I had been standing near a furnace, my hands trembled, large drops of sweat trickled down my forehead and cheeks, and I pressed my toes so close together, that they pained me as much as if they had been pinched by tight shoes.

"The Duke seemed to perceive and pity the uncomfortable situation I was in, and which every moment became more painful. His questions were fewer and more studied, and my perturbation and wish for deliverance increased to the highest pitch. An attendant at last entered, and said something to the Duke, but the words 'just arrived,'

arrived,' were all I understood. The Duke bowed to me in a polite and gracious manner, and hastily left the room with the servant.

"That which I had the moment before so fervently prayed for was granted, for I stood alone in the midst of the room. A deep sigh escaped me—I wiped my forehead, fanned myself with my pocket-handkerchief, and reproached myself for my stupidity and aukwardness. Why did I not reflect at the time how I should feel, and in what light I should view the transactions of the last hour in a day or two hence, and how I should be amused and heartily laugh at what had just vexed me? But it was not in my power to do so at that moment; besides, I had a certain dark presage that my perplexing adventure was not yet concluded. I raised my eyes, and looked timidly round the lofty room; the sound of my footsteps made me start, and I did not know which way to go. I remembered that the secretary had told me that he

would

would conduct me to the concert-room as soon as my audience with the Duke was over, and that he was certain (if I was a judge of music) of my being delighted with the exquisite performance of the Duke's band. But how was it possible for a stranger, like me, to find the way to the concert-room, in such a large and intricate building as the castle was?

"I crept along upon my toes, as softly as possible, as if I was conscious of treading on forbidden ground; and not knowing which way to steer my course, went as chance directed. I passed through several rooms that I had never seen before, through various halls that were unknown to me, and along many passages, without knowing where they led to. Sometimes I went forwards, and after advancing a considerable time, fancied I must be wrong, and turned back; sometimes I turned to the right, and at others to the left, without discovering a clue by which I could find my way out of the labyrinth I was in. Sometimes I ran as fast

fast as my feet could carry me, and at others, stood as still as a post in the middle of a room; and after musing some time, I turned round, examined the four sides of it, peeped out at a window, strove to reconnoitre where I was, and thought and rethought, without discovering any thing but what I knew before, that I had lost my way, and that I must endeavour to find it. I then impatiently began my peregrination again, trod the paths that had before failed, and tried what I had just found vain, till, at last, without knowing how I came there, I perceived I was in a wing of the castle, which, as my endeavours to find the stair-case were ineffectual, increased rather than removed my difficulties.

"I knocked at several doors without receiving an answer, and opened many without finding a single person, when, to my no small satisfaction, I at last came to one where I heard the sound of voices. I gently tapped at it, perhaps so gently that it was impossible for the perons in the room to

 hear

hear me; but my impatience did not permit me to ask admittance a second time, for I opened the door, and popped my head into a room, where the appearance of a male head was as unwelcome as unexpected.

"Two abigails (for I suppose they were so) were busily employed in adorning themselves. One of them, who was half-naked, screamed, and ran into a corner of the room, and I, not less terrified than she was, started back. The other, whose dress was finished, a very fine lady, with a pair of arch black eyes and vermillion cheeks, rushed forward, slamed the door in my face, and burst out in a loud laugh, in which the other joined.

"This was the first time in my life that I had ever heard myself laughed at; and to escape from the mortifying sound, I ran as fast, or perhaps faster, than many do to get clear of a bailiff. I, at length, came to a door that stood ajar, and thinking that might possibly lead to the stair-case, I thrust it open,

open, and bolted into a room, and ran through that into another room, which brought me into a third, that had no other door but the one I entered at. I turned back into a second room, which was a bed-chamber, and looked about me. The bed was unmade; upon the pillow lay a greasy night-cap, and upon the chair a powdering-gown, that was a good deal the worse for wear. Upon the table stood a wash-hand bason with dirty water; and combs, powder, pomatum, razors, shoes, stockings, buckles, tooth powder, brushes, and a number of other apparatus of the same kind, lay huddled together in a very slovenly manner, which greatly lessened the high-flown ideas I entertained, of the magnificence that I supposed reigned in every part of the palace, and restored my mind to some degree of tranquillity.

'Was I not a fool,' said I to myself, 'with my veneration, and the diffidence it caused! how absurd was the exalted opinion I had of others, and the too mean a

one I entertained of myself! Am I not among mortals, who sleep, wash, and dress themselves the same as I do? and have not some of them a dirtier night-cap, and raggeder morning-gown than mine?'

"Such were my reflections, when the owner of the room I was in entered it, and perceiving a stranger, sprang towards me, in a hasty and suspicious manner, with these words——

'What do you want in my room?'

"I replied, with a profound obeisance, that I was looking for the concert-room.

'The concert-room!' exclaimed the man, in a passion, 'the concert-room here! who are you, Sir?—you hesitate!—ha! what's the meaning of this?'

"I endeavoured to appease his wrath, and remove his suspicion of my being a thief, by telling him, as plainly as I could, which I suppose was unintelligibly enough, who I was, and the reason of my straying into his room. My dress, my honest countenance, and white kid gloves, which I had not

not yet pulled off, seemed to convince him of my honesty, although he could not pardon my intrusion; and he told me, in a peevish, dissatisfied manner, the way to the concert-room. I left him in a tremor, without having profited by his instructions; for his directions to turn to the right, when I came to the little ball-room, and to the left, as soon as I had passed the blue saloon, were useless to a poor fellow, who was so unpardonably stupid as not to know where the little ball-room and blue saloon were.

'Then I find,' said I to myself, 'that there are people in palaces, as well as in streets and cottages, who do not understand the art of giving a plain direction!'—and I began to grumble, in my own mind, at the man's stupidity, when I recollected that I had certainly, that day, given no great proofs of my own cleverness; and that I therefore ought not to judge others too hastily. A few moments after I espied my friend the secretary, at the end of the long gallery: I hastened to him; he expressed

his

his surprise at find me there, and told me that he was just going to the Duke's apartment to look for me. He returned with me, and opened a door that I had knocked at several times without venturing to open it, which led to the staircase, and on my telling him so, he laughed and said—"Ay! ay! that's often the case; we frequently miss the right path, by our too great circumspection and fear of going wrong." He conducted me to a seat, and then left me.

"I now began to breathe freely, and flattered myself with the pleasing hope that my disasters were entirely over, and that the harmony which would soon greet my ear would reward me for it, and make me forget the thirst that tormented me. But my parched tongue reminded me every moment that it would be infinitely more agreeable to drink first and hear afterwards; and I could not help thinking that it was strange—very strange indeed! to be invited in a formal manner, to a royal palace, without

out being refreshed with a glass of wine, or even water.

'Ay!' thought I, as I looked at my watch, 'if I was at my friend Thompson's now, I should be sitting with him and his amiable family at tea in the great honey-suckle arbour.'

"During this monologue, I perceived that every person in the room was in motion, and a gentleman who stood near me jogged me with his elbow, and said—'The Duke! The Duke!' I turned round, and perceived the Duke, leading a strange lady, followed by the Duchess, and a swarm of courtiers, close to me. I unluckily fancied it was my duty to make a profound reverence, and stepping forward, as I am accustomed to do when I make a bow, I almost impeded the Duke's passage.

'What does the man want?' said the Duchess, (who certainly took me for a beggar,) in a low voice, but loud enough for me to hear. I started back with a vacant stare, like a person who is disturbed in a dream.

dream. Many persons smiled, others whispered, and I returned to my seat without knowing how I got thither. This was worse—a thousand times worse, than all the rest! what malignant demon urges me to do whatever I wish to avoid to-day? sure there never was such a blundering stupid blockhead as I am!—what will the Duke, what will every person in the room think of me? These were my thoughts, as I wiped away the large drops of sweat from my forehead, with a violence that made it smart.

'What does the man want?' sounded continually in my ear. My pride was hurt by those words; and I felt how wretchedly he acts his part, who, without intending to ask a favour, gives others reason to suppose he does; and how mortifying it is to be refused that which we never thought of requesting. I made a number of sagacious remarks on the occasion; but prudence and I were at variance at the time, and reflection always came too late. However, the

the soothing sounds of the music, which was remarkably fine, and every eye being fixed, not on me, as I supposed would be the case, but on the orchestra, the awful silence that reigned during a beautiful solo on the violoncello, the attention and tranquillity that the hearers' countenances expressed, which formed a striking contrast to the expressive pleasure that animated the performers' eyes and features, the elegant decorations of the room, and judicious distribution of the lights, which likewise rivetted my attention, calmed the tempest that raged in my bosom, and made me forget my last blunder sooner than I had done my former ones.

"The Duke turned his head round once or twice, and I fancied he looked at me, and that his countenance expressed displeasure. My perturbed imagination immediately suggested the idea that he was offended at the improper liberties I had taken, and the *ennui* I had occasioned him: For at that moment I was far from supposing

that

that more important concerns had probably obliterated every trace of me from his mind; and that, had my manners been as polished as they were the reverse, he would have remembered them as little as he did my awkwardness. I reviewed my past conduct with shame and indignation, and could not conceive how it was possible for me to act and speak in the thoughtless, stupid, and incoherent manner I had done.

'Was the same opportunity to offer again,' said I to myself, 'I am certain I should conduct myself in a very different manner. How easily could I have made a polite reply to that compliment—given a pertinent answer to that question—introduced this and that witty thought—and could I not, without any impropriety, have given a different turn to the conversation, which would have enabled me to introduce the ideas that I had so carefully collected in my mind, and which are now entirely lost!'

"These dismal reflections were sometimes interrupted by the recollection of the enjoyments

enjoyments that awaited me at my return to my friend Thompson's; and I comforted myself with the thought that his conversation and supper would make me amends for all my disappointments and sufferings; and I alternately listened to the music, and the heavy shower of rain that rattled against the windows. Much as I knew that rain was wanted, and heartily as I had joined with my friend in wishing for it at dinner-time, yet I cannot say the sound was agreeable to me at that moment; and how I should get home, was a fresh source of uneasiness to my agitated mind.

The concert was over about nine o'clock; every body left the room, and I slowly followed the crowd. Had I been lucky enough to have met with the bustling secretary, he would probably have lent me a great coat, and ushered me out of the castle. He promised to come to me again before the concert was finished; but he was too consequential a person, and had always so much of something like business on his hands,

hands, that it was impossible for him to remember what he said a quarter of an hour before, or rest quietly two minutes in the same place.

"Most of the people who left the room with me, dispersed themselves in different parts of the castle; the rest, sheltered with umbrellas, went several ways, without troubling their heads about me; and I again stood, helpless and forlorn, under a portico fronting the great gate.

"The fear of spoiling my clothes made me at first determine to remain there till the rain was over, but the wish to see my friend, and the craving in my stomach, soon made me alter my intention; and after I had buttoned my coat, and covered my hat—my best hat, with my pocket-handkerchief, I ran as fast as I was able across the court-yard towards the guard-room. I am ignorant if it was my excessive speed, which I believe is something uncommom at Court, or what other reason brought the last and greatest of all my misfortunes on me,

me, but before I reached the sentry-box I heard a dog bark, and the moment after a hideous shaggy mastiff, of a monstrous size, rushed forward, and jumped upon me with such impetuosity, that my feet slipped and I fell backwards. There I lay in the dirt, with the animal's two fore paws on my breast. He barked and howled in the most frightful manner, and I trembled, and roared as loud as it was possible for a person with sound lungs to roar. The sentry, instead of hastening to my assistance, hooted and burst out in a horse laugh, and I continued to scream out—'Help! help!—for God's sake, help!'

"One of the soldiers called to me and said—'Don't be afraid—the dog wont bite you!' But I, far from being pacified by his assurances, continued to vociferate, 'Help! help!' I was at last freed from the beast's clutches, and helped up; but I was in such a tremor that I could hardly stand. I however hurried away as fast as I could, without stopping to thank my deliverer, or to pick up my hat. I fancied the dog was still at

my

my heels, and, as soon as I recovered my breath, I ran as fast as I had done before, without venturing to look behind me or sideways.

'What a miserable life a court life is!' muttered I to myself; 'and I am, to be sure, the stupidest and most untoward being that ever existed, incapable of extricating myself out of the least difficulty. I believe I surely must be quite altered from my former self, and that I shall never again be what I was.'

"In the panic I was in, it is no wonder that I missed the way Charles Thompson brought me; and who knows how far I should have strayed, if my career had not been stopped by my running against a tree. I started, looked up, and perceived myself in a lonely place, where there were only a few miserable hovels.

"I hastened to the first, with the intention of desiring somebody to shew me the way to town. I saw a faint glimmering of light through the broken casement, and gently pushed open the door, that

that was unlatched; but the scene that presented itself to my view prevented my proceeding for some moments. A gentleman, plainly but genteelly dressed, stood with his back towards me, before a poor old lame woman, whose hands were raised to Heaven, and her eyes bathed in tears.

'God bless your Honour,' said she in broken sentences, 'for your goodness to me!—I must have perished for want, when my poor son James died, who maintained me and my blind daughter, if it had not been for your Honour!—I hope God Almighty will reward you for your bounty to me and her!—But, dear young gentleman, I am afraid you distress yourself on our account, for you have no parents, nor an independent fortune, and I know how many wants a young nobleman, who lives at Court, has.'

'Make yourself easy on that account, good woman,' was his reply; 'what I give you I can spare without any inconvenience to

to myself. The money I give you, I used to apply to another purpose, but now it is better employed.'

'We will pray for your Honour, as well as for his Highness the Duke, who is likewise a friend and benefactor to the poor,' was the woman's reply. 'God bless both you and him!'

"I was so much affected that I could hardly help joining in the poor woman's ejaculation; tears started into my eyes, and I was happy to find that I was myself again.

'I am glad that I was at Court,' said I to myself. 'How can the Court help my being unacquainted with its customs. Good people are to be found at Court as well as every where else, but their manners differ from ours. In my own sphere I believe I am tolerable, and I hope I shall never soar beyond it again.'

"The young man, after bidding the old woman farewell, turned round and approached

proached the door; and you may judge of my surprise when I perceived that he was one of the two gentlemen that had endeavoured to entertain me a few hours before. His voice seemed familiar to me before I saw his face, but the flurry I was in at the time, and his having changed his coat, prevented my entertaining the least idea of his being one of my former companions. He was as much surprised at finding me there, as I was at seeing him.

'This is an unexpected pleasure indeed,' said he, shaking my hand; 'you was called away so abruptly, that we had not time to take leave of you! but where are you going to now?'

"I told him that I had missed my way to Henningstone, and that I was in search of a guide. He immediately offered to conduct me there, and on my objecting to his doing so, he politely assured me that I should deprive him of a pleasure, if I refused to let him go with me.

'It is not our supper-time yet,' said he; 'the rain is over, the evening pleasant, and I assure you the satisfaction your company will afford, will amply reward me for the trouble of going a little out of my way.' We went, and his entertaining conversation shortened the road. He enquired, as we went along, what was become of my hat, which led to a relation of some of my disasters. He pitied, without laughing at me, and blamed the Secretary for his, what he called, unpardonable neglect. He desired me, when I came to Henningstone again, to pay him a visit, which, he said, he flattered himself he should be able to render more agreeable to me than this had been. We soon, almost sooner than I wished, arrived at my friend's hospitable mansion, and he left me with the assurance that he would send me my hat the next morning.

"I hastily opened the gate; Charles, who was watching at the window for my return, ran to meet me as soon as he heard the creaking

creaking of the hinges. He caught hold of my hand with a—'Come! come!—the supper is ready!' and we hurried across the farm-yard together, as fast as we could. The cattle lay in supine repose, and Busto, my friend's spaniel, wagged his tail, and ran barking to announce our approach.

"Mrs. Thompson met me at the door with a smiling infant in her arms, and received me with these words—'Welcome! thrice welcome from Court to our frugal meal! come, the supper waits. Charles, call your father.'

"The cloth was laid, and a dish of asparagus and shoulder of lamb, that were left in the kitchen to keep warm, were added to the sallad and currant tart that already stood upon the table. My friend entered the room soon after, with a jug of ale in one hand, and a bottle of wine in the other, and welcomed me in the same hearty manner as his wife had done. We sat down to supper. My friends laughed at the recital

of my woes more than I was able to do myself, for the wounds were still sore. However, a few hours sleep has enabled me to view evey perplexing circumstance in the same ludicrous light, and I am now able to join in the laugh, and assure you that I am reconciled to the world, to courts, and myself; and that I am

"Your contented

"And sincere friend,

"GOODWIN."

THE

THE WEDDING GIFT.

SEVERAL hours of the evening of Maitland's wedding day were gaily passed; and elate with joy, that handsome young man sat next his beautiful bride at supper. The table was covered with the most costly viands the season produced; and the number of lights in the room engaged the attention of the passers-by in the street, many of whom stood still, and peeped in at the windows, to get a sight of the festive board, on which the savory dishes smoaked, the

the richest wines sparkled, and innumerable wax candles blazed.

The room re-echoed with the various sounds of laughter, exclamations of mirth, and the jingling of glasses, and every now and then soft harmonious music sounded from an adjoining apartment, which was not loud enough to interrupt the conversation. Witty and silly jests chased each other; and some allowing too free a flight to their fancy, and forgetful of the respect that was due to the company, permitted themselves the use of expressions that made some of the young ladies blush, and others smile and titter, with more satisfaction than girls should ever shew on such occasions. Some of the guests were convinced that this meal was more on their account than the new-married couple's; pleasure flew from some during the participation of it, and the satisfaction of others was increased by the same cause. Some were happy, although silent and reserved; others were loud, and apparently merry, whose hearts were strangers to

to peace and content; and the minds of many suggested the observation—"That the pleasure enjoyed at expensive entertainments seldom answers the expectation that is formed of it." During supper, a number of applicable and sentimental copies of verses, that were either written or borrowed for the occasion, were read, admired, and handed round the table. Several of them were read aloud, and although most of them were quite common-place, without containing a single sentiment that was new or interesting, they all met with the entire approbation of the company; and the applause of each separate piece ended with a bumper that was drank to the writer's health.

"Here is one entitled a Gazette from the Land of Love!" said the wearied reader with a sigh, and an oblique glance at his heaped plate, and the length of the verses he held in his hand: however, after strengthening himself with a glass of wine, he began to read them with an audible voice; but he had

had only proceeded a few lines, when he was interrupted by a maid coming into the room, and giving the bridegroom a small parcel, with these words:—" The person who brought it desired me to tell you it was a wedding gift."

"Who does it come from?"

"I don't know."

"Who brought it?"

"A waiter from the Gold Lion," were questions and answers that passed in a moment.

"It is odd enough," said Maitland, looking at the parcel, and turning it round in his hand, "that it should be sent from an inn! When you have finished the piece you are reading, Sir, we will see what it contains."

Maitland, notwithstanding the appearance of indifference he assumed, was extremely anxious to know what the paper contained. The greatest part of the company felt as curious as he did; and if one of the guests had not been the author of the

the piece that was just begun, it would certainly have been laid aside unread; and never was a real newspaper attended to with more indifference than this Gazette from the Land of Love. However, tiresome as it was, it was finished at last, and the general attention was fixed on the unexpected present which Maitland had held all the time in his hand. It was very light, wrapped up in writing paper, and sealed in two places. It was directed to him, and under the name was written these words—"To be opened carefully, that the inclosed may not be damaged." He had with a smile shewn the address to his blushing bride, and the person who sat on the other side of him; the latter had handed it to her neighbour, and he to his, and so on, by which means all the company had seen it.—They all declared it to be written by a lady, for the affair happened many years ago, at a time when a female hand and style were known at first sight. Maitland broke the seals, and opened the paper in

a very cautious manner; but another cover concealed its contents, and increased his uneasiness.

A jocose person carefully packs up a trifle sometimes, that he may raise our curiosity, and have the pleasure of laughing at us for it, was the thought that first started into his mind; but it was soon chased by the reflection, that made a still deeper impression on it, that a prudent person may do the same by way of caution, and that poison is generally inclosed in more papers than one. What can it be? thought he, as he confusedly opened the second paper, which, to his no small surprise, contained a third.

He started back as soon as he saw it, for the idea of poison recurred still more forcibly to his mind, and filled it with horror. Trembling with impatience, he hastily tore open the third cover, and a little parcel, carefully wrapped up in a piece of fine linen, fastened with three small black pins, dropt into his hand. The cloth was white, and

and on one side of it a simple cross was sewn with black silk, over which the words —"I was!" was embroidered in silk of the same colour, and formed a kind of demi-circle round the cross.

Maitland's bosom was more and more oppressed, his hand loitered in opening the last fold of this mysterious packet, and the agitation he was in was visible to those who sat near him. At last, with hasty impatience, he pulled out the pins that fastened it, and then paused again, without his being able to assign a reason for doing so, although many past scenes at that moment rushed into his mind. It is impossible to say how long his undetermination would have lasted, if his bride had not animated his wavering resolution, by saying—"Make haste, dear Maitland!—Now we shall see what is in it!"

The decisive covering was at last removed, and, without being accompanied by either prose or verse, it contained nothing but a nosegay of withered natural

flowers;

flowers; but the entire state they were in, was a proof how carefully they had been preserved. They were tied together with a piece of narrow rose-coloured ribbon, that was pretty much faded. Every one knows how soon rose-colour fades; and Maitland felt as if he was going to sink into the earth. His cheeks were of a livid hue, his eyes were fixed on the ceiling, his hand sunk upon the table, and overturned a glass of wine that stood near him; and without knowing what he did, he leaned back in his chair, and the faint exclamation of—"Oh my God!" escaped his quivering lips.

"What's the matter—what's the matter?" was repeated by every one at the same time; and—"For God's sake, what's the matter with you, dearest Maitland?" was stammered by the terrified bride. He was silent, and she, with a trembling hand and palpitating heart, lifted up the flowers, without being able to conceive what could be the reason of the visible distress her hus-

band

band was in. But the fatal secret was soon explained, for in Maitland's well-known hand was written on the ribbon—"When Maitland proves false to Julia, may Heaven forsake him!"

The flowers fell from her hand as suddenly as if fire had been thrown upon it, her lap and part of the table were strewed with the withered shrivelled leaves, and she fell back in her chair as pale as death, seemingly near fainting.

"What can be the matter?" was echoed by every voice still louder than before. But as no reply was given, the company ceased to interrogate; but in half-whispers, and with scrutinizing looks, they communicated their suppositions to each other. The servants moved backwards and forwards, without seeming to know what they should do, and the suppressed exclamations of some—"'Tis incomprehensible!—who can explain the reason of it?" and the louder demands of others—"A glass of wine!"

ne!" or, "Fetch some hartshorn drops!" ere alike disregarded by them.

Whilst matters were in this state, the maid, who had delivered the fatal parcel, again entered the room, and increased the confusion that already reigned in it, by saying to the bridegroom—

"I had hardly given you the paper, Sir, when the waiter returned in a great hurry, and enquired if I had delivered it? and on my saying yes, he ran away as fast as his legs could carry him; but he came back again just now, and brought this letter, which he desired me to give you immediately."

The sight of the letter made Maitland tremble as if he was in an ague fit, a sudden shivering seized his limbs, and he felt as if cold water was thrown over his body; but the curious looks of the company, which to him seemed reproachful ones, and the faint hope he entertained that the letter would clear up this strange affair,

affair, and relieve him from the torturing suspence he endured, made him grasp hold of it, as hastily as a weary traveller, who is just awakened from a peaceful slumber, would a serpent that was endeavouring to force its way into his bosom. But as soon as his eyes glanced over the superscription, and he recollected the writing, which he immediately did, he started as if struck by lightning. "Julia! Julia!" escaped his trembling lips; the returning colour fled from his cheeks, which were again overspread with a death-like paleness; his eyes were sometimes fixed on the door, as if he expected the arrival of an unwelcome visitor, and sometimes they wandered timidly about the room, as superstitious persons are wont to do at the midnight hour, whose hearts sink within them at the thought of that being the time when ghosts usually make their appearance.

For a few moments he seemed to endure the most violent inward conflict, when, suddenly recollecting himself, he grasped the

the letter in his hand, pushed back his chair, rose from table, and hurried into the next room. Every one jumped up, and the bride, pale as an alabaster statue, and shaking like an aspen leaf, followed him. Her astonished parents did the same, and a relation, by her father's desire, did all in his power to tranquillize the company, prevail on them to resume their seats, and continue their supper. They sat down again, but surprise had so entirely deprived them of their appetites, that they were incapable of eating or drinking.

A solemn silence reigned, and every one listened as attentively as possible, to try if they could discover what was passing in the adjoining room. A lady, who sat near the door, said she heard the bride say—"Oh, what an unfortunate creature I am!" That was whispered round the table, and did not a little increase the curiosity that every one felt before. The eyes of every person in the room were fixed on the door of the next. A confused noise was heard within,

but

but it was impossible to distinguish plainly what was said or doing. At first a violent bustle, and walking about in a hasty manner, then talking in a low voice, afterwards in a louder, which alternately modulated and increased to reproaching, passionate, and supplicating tones; then weeping and loud sobs, which were sometimes interrupted by the bride's exclaiming—" My God! oh, my God!" then again a gentle voice, that seemed to be endeavouring to sooth and compose the perturbed minds; and at last whispers, that were hardly audible, and reading, that was often impeded by questions that were asked the reader. It was Maitland, who, after a short account of the perplexing transaction, and an honest avowal of his former faulty conduct, read the following letter, although the variety of painful sensations which at that moment racked his mind, often made his words almost unintelligible.

" SIR,

"Sir,

"I this moment heard with horror the relation of the disagreeable affair that happened just now, without my consent or knowledge: But before I proceed, let me ease your agitated mind by the assurance of your being free, and no longer fettered by the promises you once made me.

"The unfortunate idea of sending the flowers to you was not mine. I am, indeed, innocent of the vexation they must have occasioned you; and you who are so well acquainted with my heart, must know it is incapable of forming so cruel a design; nor should a line from me have disturbed your repose, if I had not in a manner been forced to it.

"That you once loved me, Maitland, or at least endeavoured to persuade me you did, is what, I suppose, you will not attempt to deny. Nor need I recal to your memory the promises you made me two years ago, when you left our town, of hastening on the

wings

wings of love to fetch your Julia, as soon as your circumstances would permit you to marry. I fancied myself bound by our mutual vows of constancy, and therefore declined a very advantageous offer of marriage that was made me about a year and a half ago. But do not suppose that my informing you of this particular is meant as a reproach, indeed it is not, and I again solemnly declare that I freely absolve you of every promise—every vow you formerly swore to me. You have an advocate in my bosom, Maitland, that pleads your cause more forcibly than, perhaps, even your words could do!—nor does it seem surprising to me that absence should cool your affection, nor that change of situation should make other connexions more desirable than those you would have gained with my hand: besides, I have no just cause to upbraid you with treachery and deceit; your answers to my letters became cooler and shorter by degrees, till, at length, our correspondence dropped entirely.

"The

"The last letter I received from you was about six months ago, in which you hinted, in the most delicate manner, that a variety of obstacles interfered which would prevent, or, at least, delay our union for a considerable time. A few weeks ago, I accidentally heard of your being engaged to the lady you this morning married. I did not doubt the authenticity of the report, as I knew the veracity of the relator, who assured me he had several times been in company with you and your bride, at balls and other places of amusement; but you know I made no attempts to disturb your happiness, or throw difficulties in your way. I bore my fate with as much fortitude as was in my power to collect—forgave you, and endeavoured to comfort my wounded heart with the thought, that the man who, in every other action of his life, had acted with unquestioned honour and probity, ought not to be too rigidly censured for failing in one point; and that either the irresistible power

of

of beauty, or some other unavoidable reason, had occasioned your change of sentiments; and, although the cause was unknown to me, I endeavoured to persuade myself that it was weighty enough to claim the excuse and pardon of her who ever preferred your happiness to her own, and who sincerely wishes you a greater share of bliss than it would have been in her power to confer on you.

"Soon after you left our town, I formed an acquaintance with a young person about my own age; our intimacy soon ripened into friendship, and not a thought our minds formed was concealed from the other. Some months ago, she was fortunate enough to gain the affections of a gentleman, whose business detained him some time in our town. He was worthy of her in every respect, their love was reciprocal, and as there was nothing that could prevent their union, the marriage was celebrated a few days ago. My health has for some time been in rather a declining state, and my physician

physician advised me to try the effect of change of air. My friend, therefore, insisted on my accompanying her to her new habitation, which is about twenty miles from this town, through which we were obliged to pass.

"We arrived here about two hours ago, and alighted at the inn that is almost opposite to your house, without either of us knowing it to be your's; but the many carriages we saw stop at it, and the number of lights, excited our curiosity, and urged us to enquire the reason of them. As I am determined to act without disguise, I own the answer we received agitated me a good deal; a number of painful sensations darted across my mind; nor did I attempt to restrain my tears, which flowed abundantly.

"My friend's husband had some business to transact in town, and went out as soon as we arrived; and as I had charged myself with a parcel that I was to deliver to a gentleman here, I had requested him to call

at

at his house, and send him to me. I therefore opened my trunk to take it out, but as it was nearly at the bottom, I was forced to remove the greatest part of its contents before I could get at it. Whilst I was thus employed, a little box that contained my trifles of value, and which was likewise the repository of your letters, and the flowers that I had wrapped up in the fanciful manner in which you received them, when I first heard of your marriage, unfortunately presented itself to my view. I opened the box, read several of the letters to my friend, and related to her the story of the flowers—how you had gathered them one evening as we were walking in our garden, and tied them together with a piece of ribbon, that composed part of my dress, which you declared superfluous; that you went to the arbour where I had been waiting, when you entered the garden, and wrote a few words on the ribbon, and that I had promised to keep that and the flowers as tokens of your love. My tears, as I said before,

before, flowed; but I assure you, my heart was free from anger, nor did it harbour a thought of revenge; they were such as I should have shed for a departed friend; and the vanity of human expectations were oftener repeated than the falsehood and inconstancy of man.

"The gentleman I expected called whilst we were thus engaged, and being shewn into another room, I went to him, and, unsuspicious of danger, I left my flowers and letters upon the table, little thinking that friendship would wound me more severely than the bitterest enmity could have done. I went, and my friend, urged by the warmth of her affection for me, and by her forming a too rash and rigid judgment of your actions, was tempted to commit the unpardonable imprudence of sending you the flowers, which, whilst I live, I shall never cease to lament. When she first informed me of what she had done, I supposed her in jest; but since I am convinced of the truth of it, my mind is tortured

tured in the most cruel manner; and to relieve the anguish I suffer, is the chief cause of my troubling you with this letter. My friend is as miserable as I am, for I have succeeded in convincing her of the impropriety of her proceedings, and she declares she shall never forgive herself, if her indiscretion is attended with any bad consequences to you. I, however, strive to comfort her, with the assurance of my being certain that you will pardon the error that sincere, but misguided, friendship, tempted her to commit.

"Farewell, and be assured that I bear you no ill-will, and that I shall ever find consolation in this thought—the Power that rules every thing for our best, did not find our union good, and that therefore it would not have tended to either of our happiness. I shall return home in a few months, and then, if my health permits, I shall most likely conform to my parents wish, and marry the very deserving person they have chosen for me; but I beg you

 will

will be persuaded that whatever my fate may be, that your happiness, and that of every one who is related to you, will be as dear to me as my own.

"Once more farewell, my dear Maitland, and let us for the future, in the little circle in which we are doomed to move, endeavour to warn young people, who are blinded by passion, against binding themselves by promises, without maturely reflecting on what they do, and the little probability there often is of their having the power or inclination to keep them: by doing so, we shall perhaps prevent many from feeling a pang that might otherwise have embittered the happiest hour of their lives. I beg, if you ever think of me, it may be without self-reproach, and with the same sentiments of esteem as Julia will ever feel for her friend Maitland."

An earnest conversation followed the reading

reading of this letter, and the guests could easily distinguish the different sounds of persuasion, consolation, and deliberation, that were repeated in the inner room. At last the door was opened, and the bride, less pale than before, but with a countenance that plainly expressed the variety of contending passions that had lately passed in her mind, returned to the company; she was followed by Maitland, whose cheeks glowed like fire, and the rest of her relations, and they all, with as much composure as they could assume, retook their places at the table.

An apology was made to the company, and the cause of the confusion that had interrupted the pleasure of the evening, was said to be occasioned by the account of the sudden death of a near relation of the bridegroom's. The excuse was accepted, and not a word more was said about the affair, but no person in the room believed the account. The second course was set upon the table, fresh wine was

 brought

brought in, and every one tried to be cheerful, but none succeeded in the attempt. The pleasure of the evening was entirely destroyed.

"What a number of people are assembled in the street!" said one who had been studying some time what he should say, to break the silence that reigned.

"Yes!" replied another, and the conversation ended.

A carriage drove past the house, the driver cracked his whip, and one of the company observed they must be post-horses, and wondered where the people could be going to so late. Alas! Maitland knew too well; and fresh terror filled his mind. His paleness returned, and without knowing what he did, he hurried out of the room. He soon returned, and several of the company afterwards declared that the traces of tears were visible in his eyes. He resumed his place, and did all in his power to appear cheerful and animate his guests; but that his mirth was but affected, and a

stranger to his heart, was too plain to escape the observation of any one; for the more eager his pursuit after joy and gladness was, the further they fled from him, and eluded his grasp.

As soon as the supper was over, the ball was opened by the bride and bridegroom; but never, I believe, were any persons less inclined to dance than they, nor ever so much confusion and whispering at a ball given on a similar occasion as at that. The couples moved mechanically, but neither gaiety nor pleasure animated their motions; and the marks of the perplexing scene they had lately witnessed, were as conspicuous as the damage a corn-field has sustained by a violent hail-storm, although it was immediately succeeded by sunshine and refreshing showers.

The next day the whole town was informed of the strange event that happened at Maitland's wedding; much was said, and various were the enquiries that were made about it. The parcel was known to be

 sent

sent by a lady who passed through the town; that circumstance gave rise to a number of tales that were related as facts, and conjectures that were propagated, which did not reflect much honour on Maitland. Some of them approached pretty nearly the truth; but as the real story never transpired, more blame was thrown on him than perhaps would have been done if it had. This incident was the news of the day for some time, till, like all other news of the same kind, it was dropped for a newer subject, and thought of no more.

But if the adventure I have just related made as transient an impression on the minds of the new-married couple, is not in my power to say, nor would I on any account venture to answer that question in the affirmative. Fortunately for them, this affair ended better than many of a like nature would have done; for not every forsaken maiden would, like Julia, endeavour to console her perfidious lover, and restore composure to his mind. How

many,

many, in her place, would have rejoiced at the opportunity of revenging the anguish, the sleepless nights, the faded charms, the disappointed hope, and shipwrecked expectations, that his treachery and broken oaths had occasioned her: How few would be able to imitate the generosity of her sentiments, and have soothed his mind with the pleasing hope of her future prospects not being disagreeable to herself, and that she acquiesced in the decrees of Providence without repining.

The *eclaircissement* of such a story might have caused more bustle than this apparently did—I say apparently, for although every thing seemed to pass over silently, who can assert that the cause which so unexpectedly marred the pleasure of the evening, did not poison Maitland's days with remorse and self-reproach, and, like a barbed arrow, leave a rankling sting in his wife's bosom, which robbed her of repose for ever!"

LINLEY'S COURTSHIP.

ONE fine afternoon, at the time of the year that the lime-trees were in blossom, a select company of friends agreed together to pay a visit to the worthy clergyman of a neighbouring village. I with pleasure accepted the invitation to be one of the party, and accompanied my friend Wentworth to his brother-in-law, Linley's house, to fetch him, his wife, and as many of his children as were able to walk so far. Even the thought of my short stay at Linley's tended to increase my satisfaction, which was

was of the kind one feels when in our walks we happen to find the gate of a pleasant garden open: We willingly stop a moment or two, our eye wanders with satisfaction over the well-regulated spot, we regale ourselves with the sight of its various beauties, and then walk on, pleased with what we have seen.

I had reason to expect a sensation of this kind in the house I was going to, for I had never entered it without admiring Linley's cheerful integrity, the gentle and amiable manners of his wife, the unaffected tenderness with which the happy couple behaved to each other, the respectful affection of their eldest child, a girl about twelve years of age, the pleasure the parents took in viewing the youthful and infantine sports of their younger children, and the harmony that reigned in the whole family. Nor was I disappointed in the expectation I had formed; I found the accustomed cheerfulness in the house, but, owing to the

expected pleasure, it expressed itself rather louder than usual.

The sprightly daughter stood at the street-door, waiting for her uncle and me, with her gloves on, and her work-bag hanging on her arm. We met the father in the passage, with his hat and cane in his hand, and he desired us to walk into the parlour, where we found Mrs. Linley, who was quite ready, except having her hat on, adjusting the dress of a little girl.

Wentworth and I went to the window, and talked about the beauty of the clear unclouded sky, and the pleasantness of the road between two rows of lime-trees, that led to the village we were going to; and how delightful the aromatic scent of the blossoms would be when we returned by moonlight.

"Yes, it will be very pleasant indeed," said Linley. "If you approve of it, my dear," to his wife, "we will not come back till it is late. The children shall run themselves quite tired to-day."

"He

He sat down, as he pronounced the last word, on the chair that stood nearest him, without looking if there was any thing upon it, but immediately sprang up again. His wife ran towards him, and exclaimed—"Oh, you wicked creature, what have you done? I believe you have spoiled my hat!" She articulated those words in a hasty manner, but neither her voice nor gestures denoted the least degree of peevishness.

"Do not alarm yourself, Maria," said Linley, "it has not hurt me; hats are elastic and give way."

"Sooner than many heads that wear them," was added by Wentworth.

"Then I find you have but an indifferent opinion of your sister's patience," replied Mrs. Linley; and she gave her brother a gentle tap as she hurried past him towards her crushed hat.

"But I hope you are not angry with me?" said her husband.

"Do you know, my dear, that you really alarmed

alarmed me, for I thought I had frightened you."

"I am not angry," replied she, "nor could I be frightened at what you long before prognosticated would happen." And such an arch smile accompanied the last words, that it was easy to perceive they alluded to something pleasant.

"Prognosticated long ago!" said Linley with a look of surprise.

"I find my memory is better than your's," replied his wife in a jocose manner.—"Above thirteen years ago."

Linley paused a moment, then burst out a laughing, pressed his wife's hand, and exclaimed—"Oh, I remember!"

The hat was now examined, but it was reduced to such a chaos, that the mother and daughter's endeavours to render it wearable for that afternoon proved ineffectual.

"It does not signify," said Mrs. Linley to the girl, as she left the room to fetch another head-dress; "you may pull it to pieces

to-morrow,

to-morrow, iron out the ribbon, and make it up again."

I could not help admiring the serenity of a matrimonial horizon, which the demolition of a very pretty hat had not the power to cloud even for a moment. Alas! trifles of still less consequence sometimes banish good-humour and peace out of many families for several days.

Mrs. Linley soon returned, and we began our peregrination. We found the rest of our party waiting for us at a little distance from town, where we had appointed to meet; and the gaiety of our minds corresponded with the smiling prospect that met our eye whichever way we turned it. The different shades of lively green of the leaves of the long rows of lime-trees, the chequered meadows through which our winding path led, where the blossoms of red and white clover, yellow cowslips, and blue sea spur, seemed to strive to conceal the fresh verdure of the grass; our heart-felt admiration of the various beauties that

Nature had lavished with such a bountiful hand in that charming spot, cheerful conversation, and innocent jests, gathering wild flowers, and tying up nosegays of them, with which we adorned each other, shortened, and rendered our walk to the village still more agreeable.

Such a little journey is always pleasant, and those who are doomed to live continually in towns, cannot fix on a better method of heightening the enjoyments of life, and adding variety to its charms, than by sometimes visiting the country, not in expensive parties of pleasure, as most town-people do, but in little jaunts such as I am describing, which never fail exhilirating my spirits; and I never returned from my friend's, the clergyman's, house that we were now going to, without feeling more satisfied with myself and others, than I did before my visit.

The small circumference of the village, which the eye can easily overlook, and the low, straggling, thatched cottages, among which

which the gray steeple of the rude-built church raises its humble head, never fail inspiring me, whilst I am still at a distance, with the ideas of comfort and compactness, which seem to compress the powers of my mind into a smaller compass, but at the same time enable me to feel its workings more forcibly and distinctly. As I gradually approach, I am able to distinguish the separate parts of the little whole. My entrance into the village is not obstructed by either gate nor turnpike; the crooked lane of low, ill-built hovels, with their sloping roofs and casement windows, seems to widen the nearer I come to it; and when I meet the healthy, robust peasants, with their implements of husbandry, their friendly salute, and inquisitive looks, always inspire me with the thoughts of liberty and content, poor and happy, circumscribed and easy, in so forcible a manner, that I contemplate every object I see, even the most trivial, with attention. Here the brownish moss and yellow stone-crop upon

upon the tops of the houses, and the luxuriant house-leek, millfoil, and pellitory, that spontaneously spring up upon the walls; there a swallow's nest in a window, and a transient glance, as I pass by it, at the large fire-place; the bedstead with linsey-woolsey curtains, the trenchers, pipkins, and cups and saucers that adorn the mantlepiece:—these, and a thousand other objects that most people would pass by unnoticed, ornament the picture that my mind forms of unenvied and unenvying rural happiness: And when my worthy friend and his wife welcome me to their house with a hearty shake of the hand, and conduct me into their little parlour, which joins the kitchen, where the only ornament in the former is a large bowpot in a stone jar, that stands upon the oak table, under the little looking-glass, but the shelves of the latter, which are fronting the parlour-door, are adorned with long rows of shining pewter; the churn and milk-pails stand near the dresser, upon which a number of milk-

milk-pans are set to cool; and when I attentively listen to the clergyman's account of his crops, seed-time, harvest, and the wonderful fecundity of nature—the being in his house gives more weight to his arguments, and makes me feel more interested in what he says than I should be any where else, by the chirping of the sparrows, and the cooing of the doves that flutter round the posts of the pigeon-house in the yard, as well as by the sight that the window that looks into it affords, of cows surrounded by swarms of gaudy, speckled fowls, voracious ducks, and gabbling geese; the latter either scratching, pecking, flying about, or moving heavily along, and the former stretched at their ease and chewing the cud; when the stillness that reigns in the house is only interrupted by the neighing of horses that are passing by the other window in the street, or the bellowing of oxen that are returning from their daily labour, or the bleating of sheep, and the tinkling of the rams' bells—I say, at such

times,

times, I can hardly help fancying myself in the age of patriarchal simplicity and hospitality, and wishing a country life had fallen to my lot.

Such were the pleasures we expected, and such were the pleasures we found at the end of our walk; they consisted in the society of the worthy clergyman and his agreeable family, and a pleasant walk in the garden and orchard after tea, in examining the treasures that the farm-yard and barns contained, and in a visit to the church-yard. I hope no one will be surprised at my mentioning the last as a pleasure, for that it was so to us, was proved by the length of time we remained in it; and I think the idea must naturally occur to every thinking mind (after he has seen the fruits of the husbandman's toil), to visit the spot that is destined for his last place of repose.

Some of the company conversed under a fine large alder-tree, near the porch of the church; others wandered about, and read

read the epitaphs on the tomb-stones, and amused themselves with endeavouring to find out the words that the tooth of time had effaced; and others stood upon a little hillock that overlooked the whole at once; whilst the eyes of another were fixed on a gloomy elder-tree, in a garden contiguous to the church-yard, the boughs of which hung over the wall, and nearly concealed an old monument.

The afternoon and part of the evening passed in this manner, and the sun was beginning to set, when our kind host came and collected us all together, and desired us to go with him to a little grove near the garden, where, as he said, supper was waiting.

We gladly followed our cheerful leader, and arrived at the pleasant spot, where we found preparations making for supper, which our friend's eldest daughter informed us would be ready in about half an hour. "In half an hour!" exclaimed her father; "why, I thought it was upon the table. I

am

am sure I saw the cloth laid a quarter of an hour ago."

We laughed at his mistake; he begged our pardon, and desired us to amuse ourselves as well as we could, whilst he went home and hurried his wife. We entreated him not to do so, and assured him that the later we supped the more agreeable it would be to us, for as the evening was so fine, we did not intend to return to town till it was late. "The later the better," replied he; "I must, however, leave you to yourselves, to take care that no mistake happens with the ale and cyder, for I am myself head-butler."

The company then dispersed, and every one went as and where whim, curiosity, or inclination directed. Linley and his wife walked arm in arm into the grove; their daughter and some girls of her own age, ran about a meadow, and gathered primroses and daisies, whilst the younger children played, or rolled themselves about upon the grass. Others went to the fish-

pond,

pond, and loosened a little boat that was fastened on one side of it, rowed themselves about, and when they were in the middle of it, they called to their companions, who were on shore, and asked them if they did not envy them their naval expedition?

Wentworth and I went down a narrow lane that led to the orchard, and we stopped at a mossy bench, under a pear-tree that was in full blossom. We looked at each other without speaking, and, as if each had divined the other's wish, seated ourselves upon it. The mild rays of the setting sun pierced through the branches of the lofty tree, and afforded a pleasing mixture of light and shade.

"I have long perceived," said my friend, "how sincerely you are interested in my brother-in-law, Linley's, and his wife's domestic happiness, and you, doubtless, remember that I lately mentioned his eccentric proposals of marriage to you. I have a letter of my sister's, and a copy of one of his, in my pocket, and as we have time,

if

if you think they will afford you any amusement, I will read them to you." I thankfully accepted of his offer, and he continued—"The first is one that my sister wrote me just before I left the university, and I am certain you will agree with me in thinking there is a good deal of originality in the second." He took the letters out of his pocket-book, and read as follows:

"Dear Brother,

"If the dusky morn calls you at an early hour to your studies, be assured that the pleasing perturbation of your sister's mind has awakened her still sooner. I am happy, dear Edward, very happy indeed; and I only lament that our dear parents did not live long enough to witness my felicity.—I am certain, if you was here at present, you would not venture to brag of your early rising, as you used to do, for I will bet whatever you please, that

that I was awake this morning an hour before you. When I got up, the street was quite dead, not a soul was stirring in it, and it was so dark that I could hardly see to read at the window; only the top of St. Mary's steeple was tinged with a reddish hue, and the swallows that have built under our roof began to twitter a long time after I was up. I remember I once heard it asserted, that happy people were always early risers. I own I did not believe it at the time, but I am now convinced of the truth of the observation; nor can I conceive, by way of example, how it is possible for a bride or bridegroom to sleep away the finest part of a summer's morning.

"I should not be at all surprised if you were to exclaim, when you come to this part of my letter—I cannot conceive what the girl means; for, I own, I am a little incomprehensible at times, which, I believe, is owing to my early rising, as I never remarked my being so before. I own I am rather uneasy at it, for my uncle told me

 yesterday,

yesterday, that my answers to one or two questions he asked me, were as contrary as if I was light-headed. However, that I may not alarm you too much, I will strive to assign another reason, which may perhaps calm your fears on account of my senses. Know then that I am a bride—a bride since yesterday; and now, my dear brother, I will have done with fooling, and relate every thing to you, in as orderly a manner as possible.

"You know, the last time you was here, there were two gentlemen, Mr. Harris and Mr. Linley, who were particularly attentive to me; and you may probably recollect that they often walked past our house; that when they were in a room where I was, they kept as close to me as possible; and if one of them was fortunate enough to get possession of a chair next mine, he guarded it as carefully as if it had been a treasure of immense value; that they listened to every word I said, with as much attention as if they expected Sibyl-

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lian wisdom to issue from my lips, although, Heaven knows, that what I said was often not worth noticing; that when I let any thing drop, they both ran to pick it up, with as much haste as if their happiness depended on doing so; that hardly a day passed without their having something or other to do at our house; that you was pleased to observe, and endeavoured to prove, by indubitable authority, that there is a reason for every thing that happens in this world; and I remember you used to say, that perhaps without the help of necromancy, you might be able to discover the cause from whence those effects sprung. I was convinced, soon after your departure, of what, I own, I had long before suspected, that you was in the right with regard to the motives of those two gentlemen, for they both made proposals of marriage to me nearly at the same time. I have accepted one of them; and I leave you to guess which it is, for I am called away, and shall hardly be able to conclude my letter till night. Farewell till then."

The same evening.

"My prediction that I should hardly be able to devote another hour to you the whole day, has proved true;—it has just struck eleven, and the moon lights my room more than the candle on the table does. Linley has just left me, my hands are still warm with the pressure of his, and the glow of his parting kiss is still visible on my lips. I suppose, my dear brother, you have guessed by this time that he is the favoured lover? If you have not, I shall entertain but an indifferent opinion of your sagacity for the future.

"Harris is certainly handsomer, dresses better, and has more the appearance of a man of fashion; but Linley is more liberal in his sentiments, undisguised, and economical. Harris knows how to give himself an air of importance, but Linley has more intrinsic worth; the former speaks and determines quicker, but the latter reflects and knows more. Harris talks continually about his

his employment, and how much he does, but Linley transacts his business without mentioning it.

"Harris's troublesome assiduities, and importunate declarations, proved that he was more in love with himself than me; but in every word and action Linley expressed a just estimation of his own worth, and a modest diffidence mingled with hope. When Harris kissed my hand, which never happened but when it was impossible for me to prevent it, he assumed such a weighty mien, and made so many compliments and dancing-master's airs, that I could not help suspecting he fancied I must think myself highly honoured by the attentions of such a polite gentleman; but when Linley kissed my hand, he sometimes did not bow at all; but I perceived that his lips and hand trembled.

"Harris said a great many more civil things to me than Linley, but every word the latter uttered proved that he esteemed me more. I happened once or twice to

stand at a window with the former; and he never failed, when he saw anybody that was passing by look up, to thrust his head close to mine, and whisper something in my ear, as if he wished to inform all the world on what a familiar footing we were, and that provoked me. In similar cases, Linley always drew back, and his countenance expressed the most respectful attachment.

"When Harris paid me any compliments, he always made use of such a number of abstruse and learned terms, that I often thought if he loved me as well as he pretended, he would not be able to rack his memory in the manner he did when he was near me. He frequently called me a Goddess, which always disgusted me, or compared me to the Graces, which displeased me less, as I thought they were neither more nor less than pretty girls. But when Linley, by my desire, explained to me what the Graces were, I never heard the word repeated by Harris without blushing, for it was evident that

that he was making game of me. Linley used to call me 'Amiable girl, dear Maria, or his much-loved friend,' terms that always pleased me a thousand times better than Harris's theatrical and high-flown appellations. Harris flattered me, to shew himself to advantage, but Linley loved me as well as he did himself, and always behaved to me with as much candour and tenderness as if I had composed part of his own being. Let the following little anecdote, among many that I could relate of the same kind, prove the truth of what I have just written.

"Some time ago an able young painter arrived here, and found plenty of employment. My uncle, who had long expressed a wish to have my picture by a good hand, desired me to sit to him. I made many objections, but was at last obliged to comply with his wish. I know you will smile at my saying I was obliged to comply, but that was literally the case. I have heard say that a good painter must be in love, and I am almost tempted to think mine must have

been so, not so much on account of his fixing his eyes on me with a particular expression, as by his bringing a picture, which he called mine, that he must have painted in a love fit; for it no more resembles me than I do Venus de Medicis, as you will own when you see the picture. The complexion is so very delicate, that it resembles the roseate dawn of morn on new-fallen snow; the lips are so exquisitely formed, that I am certain I must say something uncommonly wise or good to make my mouth, was it like that, please; the eyebrows are perfectly arched, the eyes large and expressive; there is a dimple in each cheek, and the flaxen hair that falls in graceful ringlets, adds to the beauty of the neck and forehead. In short, it is impossible for me to look at what was intended for my likeness, without feeling myself humbled. I showed the picture to my two lovers. 'Look at this picture, Mr. Harris,' said I, 'and tell me if you do not think I am very much flattered?'

'Flattered!'

'Flattered!' exclaimed he; 'flattered do you say? By Heaven, Madam, the painter has not done you justice!—he has disfigured—absolutely disfigured you! Where are the celestial charms that adorn your countenance?—the graces that play about your lips?—the———'

"I begged he would say no more about it, and I assure you, his fulsome flattery disgusted me so much, that I have never since been able to listen to any thing he says with patience. Linley came soon after Harris left me. 'Here is my picture,' said I; 'but it is not at all like——Look what a beauty the painter has made of me!' Linley looked slightly at the picture, and his eyes then rested on me with an expression of innate satisfaction.

'Yes, it is handsomer,' said he; 'but you please me better—much better! If that picture was mine, I would hang it up in my best room; but a portrait that represented you just as you are, should be placed over my writing-desk all day, and opposite

opposite to my bed at night, and, if possible, accompany me wherever I went.'

"I returned the pressure of his hand that accompanied those words, and looked as if I should not have been offended had he kissed my cheek, which was pretty near him. I plainly perceived how he combated against inclination, which prompted him to do so, and his timidity and respectful attachment rendered him still dearer to me.

'Ah! if I was happy enough to have a picture that only resembled you a little!' continued he; and he fixed his eyes as he spoke with so much expression, on a tolerably well executed shade of mine that hung in the room, that I could not help offering the trifle to him.

"The next morning I received the letter, of which the inclosed is a copy. I wrote it for you two days ago, for I cannot part with the original; and I am certain, you will do justice to the writer's merits, although many parts of his letter may make you smile. When you have read it, my dear

dear brother, pray tell me if you approve my choice or not?

"MADAM,

"Oh, that I dared say my dear Maria!—and yet I can hardly help addressing you by that appellation! I feel as if I must call you so, for I am certain I shall be miserable as long as I live, if you refuse to be my Maria! I have long accustomed myself to consider you as part of my being, and never to think of myself without thinking of you at the same time; I assure you, you are frequently more present to my mind than I am myself, and that for this last quarter of a year my prayers have been one continued *Ave Mary.* To be obliged to disuse myself again from what custom has rendered a second nature, would indeed make me very miserable, and that I am certain you do not wish me to be.

 "You

"You was so kind and condescending yesterday, and that you will always be so, every look at your dear resemblance, which now lies upon the table before me, enforces powerfully on my mind, and urges me to hope more than I should otherwise dare venture to do. My eyes are perpetually fixed on it, but my thoughts continually hover about the dear original; and I loose myself in the reflection of the happiness that it will be impossible for me to enjoy without her sharing it with me. But I will not attempt to persuade you—no, indeed, I will not! Make strict enquiries about my character, examine my conduct, and do not let any of my faults or failings escape your observation. I would not deceive you, could I gain the universe by doing so, nor would I purchase happiness at the expence of your's. How miserable would the thought of my wife's being unhappy, or that she repented having given me her hand, make me! No, upon my honour, I will not deceive you, nor deck myself

myself with false plumes. I wish you could see my heart, and read its every thought and intention.

"I hope you will favour me with your attention for a few minutes, in which I will endeavour to delineate myself. I will say nothing about my good qualities—I wish I had more; and I shall esteem myself happy if you sometimes discover some little merit in me, which you did not expect to find. But I will unvail my faults and foibles to you as well as I am able, and point out whatever may in future be likely to make you repent your choice; what you must know in time, and may make you blame yourself in the hour of serious reflection; and I beg you will maturely consider, if you think you shall have patience to support, and courage to amend my faults and errors. Well then, I will endeavour to draw the picture of myself, and hope the likeness will not prove a flattering one.

"I am, as you may have perhaps remarked, of a middling size; I cannot say I am

am clumsy, nor is my person genteel, as I am rather inclined to fat; nor are my features by any means handsome or regular. I think it necessary to mention these particulars to you, amiable Maria, for I do not believe you ever paid half so much attention to my person as I have done to your's. Your features are indeed so deeply imprinted on my mind, that I could describe your face so minutely, as not even to forget the two freckles under your left eye.

"But the little attention with which you have hitherto regarded me and all my sex, makes me think it my duty to remind you of my personal defects. In my dress, and whole exterior, I have till now been rather too careless; nay, I believe some persons fancy, by the aukwardness of my gait, that I am a little hump-backed, but, I assure you, they are mistaken, and that I am perfectly strait. However, since I have offered myself a candidate for your favour, I have been more attentive to myself than I used to be, and it will be in your power to make

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a bean of me if you wish me one; and if in future times you happen to see me in a threadbare coat, or one you do not like, you only need say, I wish you would leave it off, and I shall certainly do so immediately, in hopes of pleasing you better in a different one.

"But there is another habit, which has taken such deep root in my being, that I hardly believe it will be possible to eradicate it, without an entire change in my principles and way of thinking; it is that I am very apt to speak my mind freely, which many people call being unpolished and rude.

"You, adored Maria, can judge if I am uncivil, or ever wilfully give offence; but should the natural frankness of my disposition ever be in danger of degenerating into roughness, a word or hint of your's will be sufficient to keep it in proper bounds. I must own that I have accustomed myself to speak my mind, without regard to persons or my own interest, which

I have

I have more than once been given to understand was not the way to rise in the world; but I believe I am incorrigible in this respect. With this a certain want of caution, or unpliancy of disposition, is connected, (which I, however, hope I shall be able to correct in time) that always makes me expect to find every thing what it seems to be, and placed where it is for the purpose I think it is intended to answer. But I have often found myself in an error, for I have taken cups and glasses out of a buffet, to pour something into, that ran through them upon the floor, because I did not know they were broke, and set there by way of ornament. I have leaned against pillars that were too fragile to support my weight, and fallen down with them; and frequently attempted to eat what was laid upon my plate only to be looked at, for things of that kind never entered my head.

"I always thought that a chair was intended for a seat to rest oneself on; but how often have I sat myself down on something

thing that was not intended for a cushion! and I more than once have been unfortunate enough to spoil a lady's head-dress. You may depend on my taking as much care as I can not to crush your hats and caps in a like manner; but as my caution may not be sufficient to prevent my committing a fault of the kind some time or other, I think it but right to advise you to be on your guard.

"Another fault which I have not yet been able to conquer, is the violence of my temper. Yes, indeed, Maria, I am very hasty, or, I believe, to speak more properly, passionate. My saying so will perhaps surprise you, but it is, alas, too true.

"My passion, however, never lasts longer than a few minutes, and I will tell you how to appease it. A look like your's, when you sat at the window yesterday evening, would transform me in an instant from a lion to a lamb. Perhaps you have forgotten how you looked—I must therefore inform you. You sat at work, as mild and

unsuspecting as you always are, when a wasp flew in at the window, and buzzed about your face. You remained quite quiet, without even moving your hand to drive away the dangerous insect, as if you was determined to suffer patiently. Your eyes twinkled as if you was a little apprehensive, but your looks seemed to say—what reason have I to be afraid? Should you ever see me in a passion, I beg you will behave to me just as you did to the wasp, and you will find that I shall immediately repent my fault, and intreat your forgiveness: besides, let my anger be ever so violent, I am able to listen to reason, and attend to what is said to me.

"This morning, as I was looking over the papers of one of my clients, who is a very indolent and disorderly man—he had jumbled them together in such a confused manner, and made so many blunders, that it would have almost tired the patience of Job himself to set them to rights—my maid came into the room, and asked me two or three

three trifling questions, which I answered crossly; but, I assure you, dearest Maria, let my papers plague me as much as they will, you shall never be a sufferer by their doing so, if I am ever happy enough to call you mine. My maid, whose disposition happens to be rather more violent than mine, answered me tartly, that she believed I did not know what I wanted. You are in the right, replied I, after a pause; those cursed papers have stupified me so that I hardly know what I do or say; you must, therefore have patience with me, as I will strive to have with those tiresome papers; —and thus the affair was settled without further altercation.

"Perhaps my impetuosity and irritability may lead those who are not well acquainted with me to suppose that I am naturally of a peevish disposition, incapable of conforming myself to the manners of others, and peevish or quarrelsome. But, I assure you, I am free from all those faults, nor am I either obstinate or particular.

cular. I know that a husband must not interfere in domestic concerns, and that there are many inconveniences in a family that every man ought to bear with patience. For which reason I never see a father who pretends that he is not able to endure the noise of his childrens' crying, without being secretly provoked at his folly; and how often have I pitied those unhappy women, whose looks prove that their anxiety to silence their children, is partly occasioned by the wish to appease their husbands' vexation? Can any thing be more absurd than a man's being angry with his wife for what she cannot help, and what must give her as much or more pain than it does him? This is one of the things that I reckon truly ridiculous. A father that loves his children must be able to bear their noise; and if ever I am happy enough to be one, I hope I shall be able to convince my wife that I think quite rationally in that and many other respects.

"But there is one thing that gives me

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a good deal of uneasiness, and that is the doubt I entertain of its being in my power to render you as happy as I wish, and you deserve to be, and if I do not want many exterior and interior qualifications to be quite pleasing to you. Last night, for example, I recollected your favourite song, that I had so often heard you sing with pleasure, and I could not help thinking how agreeable it would be if my voice could accompany your's. I immediately tried to sing the tune, but it would not do, for, without vanity, I think my voice may very well be compared to a crow's.

"However, this and many other imperfections of the same nature, you will perhaps kindly overlook; but, dearest Maria, my fortune and income are so limited, that it is not in my power to offer you, with my hand, affluence and riches, but a moderate competence, that will require a little degree of economy to enable us to live without care. I have sufficient to permit me to keep house and maintain a family; I can

afford

afford to live in a genteel and eligible manner; and by the enquiries I have made about the prices of feathers and flowers, gauze, book-muslin, and the like transparent kinds of dresses, which are dear, do not keep warm, and are of short duration, I find I shall be able to purchase as many of those articles as are necessary to enable my wife to make a genteel appearance, but merely what is necessary; and I am too fully persuaded of your prudence to doubt of your agreeing with me, that neatness and elegance do not require the aid of many frivolous and expensive ornaments. Neither will you believe those who may endeavour to persuade you that I am avaricious; for those persons whose wants are few, owe nothing, and wish to support the character of an honest man to their end, are generally termed misers, as those who for important concerns make it a rule to lay by part of their income every year, are called stingy; and you shall judge if the reasons that induced me to do so were not very important ones.

"It is about two years ago since I first saw you, and to see, love, and wish you mine, were one and the same thing. Since that time, I own I have been a rigid economist, and the fruit of my saving is, that I have been able to furnish my house in a manner which, should you condescend to visit it, I flatter myself will meet with your approbation, without touching the small fortune that my father left me, which is placed in the public funds, (I hope) for your use, when I shall be no more. Widows and orphans were always objects that excited my commiseration, and I think he is undeserving of the name of man who does not defend their rights, and pity their misfortunes. I was never silent when I thought my speaking could be serviceable to them, and I would at this moment expose myself to the greatest danger, and brave the anger of the mightiest in their defence; therefore, can it be possible for me to forget my own widow and orphans?—God forbid I should!

"But I am grown very serious, and my tears,

tears, notwithstanding my endeavours to restrain them, blot my writing; however, what I have just said will not surprise you, for you know I wish you to be my companion in every scene of life, and beyond the grave! But I am too much affected at present to be able to write any more.— Adieu, dearest girl; do not hurry yourself, but take time to consider if you dare venture to be his, who will never cease to be most truly and unalterably

"Your

"LINLEY."

"When you have read this proposal of marriage, my dear brother, you will easily believe that no great consideration was necessary to induce me to accept of Linley's hand. Mr. Harris came soon after I had finished reading it, to pay homage to his Goddess, as he whispered to me, and crave an answer favourable to his wishes. I gave him a polite, but positive refusal; and my uncle

uncle, who greatly approved of my choice, invited Linley to supper. Every thing was settled to our mutual satisfaction, and in two months I shall be his wife. If you behave well, I shall perhaps invite you to my wedding, and——but it is high time to conclude, for it is past one o'clock, and the moon is moved so much forwarder than it was when I first sat down to write, that it reflects the shadow of my window at full length upon my bed, instead of the floor, as it did when I came up stairs. I will hasten to bed, look at its cheering beams, and fall asleep with a prayer for the happiness of those I love. Good night, dear Linley; may your repose be gentle and uninterrupted, and your dreams of me!—As for you, my dear brother, I suppose you have rested in Somnus's arms these two hours at least, and are probably dreaming of your Homer or Virgil, or perhaps of an epithalamium for

"Your affectionate sister,

"MARIA WENTWORTH."

We heard the jovial company approaching the spot where we were sitting, before Wentworth had quite finished reading these epistles. He hastily concluded them, and we left our pleasant seat to join our friends, who received us with a—'Where have you been so long? We thought you were lost? Come, the supper is upon the table. We have looked for you every where.'—We went to the arbour, where we found the clergyman and his family waiting to welcome us to the plain but plentiful meal that they had prepared for their guests, and which, to a set of happy beings as we were, was a thousand times more pleasing than the most splendid entertainment that art, luxury, or extravagance could have devised.

Linley and his wife stood near the entrance of the arbour, and his looks were fixed on her in a tender and expressive manner. Before we had time to seat ourselves, their daughter and the other girls came running towards us with a long string of reddish orebank, blue bells, wild roses, honey-

honeysuckles, and a number of other field flowers, which they presented to Linley, who immediately threw it over his wife's shoulder, with these words—" This ornament belongs to you, my dear Maria, for you are the Queen of the day!—Don't you remember this day thirteen years ago?"—She smiled, seemed innately pleased, and gave him her hand, which he pressed with warmth to his heart.

" This day thirteen years ago!" was repeated by several of the company at the same time.

" It was on that happy day," replied Linley, " that Maria promised to be mine; " and, I own, I designedly fixed on this day to visit you, my worthy friend, that we might celebrate the remembrance of it together. Do you recollect that my bride and I paid you a visit the day after?"

" I remember it perfectly well," said the clergyman. " Good God! how quickly time passes away! it seems to have been only a few days ago when you was here as

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bridegroom; is it possible that you can have been married thirteen years? Your wife still looks as youthful and blooming as a bride; but then there is your daughter standing by her, so tall and slim, that she looks older than she really is. I am much obliged to you for spending this evening here with our friends, and we will remain together till it is very late. It is full moon, and the nights are now almost as light as days. Look, the moon is up already—don't you see it behind the oak? Come, my friends, let us sit down to supper, and our first toast shall be—May every courtship prove as happy as Linley's."

"Ah!" exclaimed a young man with a languishing look at his fair neighbour, who blushed assent to what he said, "the moment in which the object we love confesses a reciprocal passion, is certainly the happiest one in our life. Are you not of my opinion, Mr. Linley?"

"It is undoubtedly a happy moment," replied Linley, looking tenderly at his wife

as he spoke; " but I do not know why it should be termed the happiest. I, at least, would not exchange the present for that. It is true, the moment that Maria promised to be mine was more rapturous, but I am now more calmly happy; and if I was then intoxicated with joy, I can now felicitate myself on the durability of my bliss."

" But pray sit down to supper," said our host.

We seated ourselves, and the evening was spent as agreeable as cordiality, good-humour, and hospitality could make it. But I shall not attempt to describe the manner in which it was passed, for our enjoyments were of the kind that are better felt than related; but I sincerely wish that those I love, and all good people, may enjoy many such evenings.

FANNY WILLING.

IT was Penstone fair-day, and everybody knows what a bustle there is in country towns at such times. The inhabitants, as well as strangers, are generally better dressed on such occasions than usual, and there is a jostling and crouding in the streets, a stopping first at this booth and then at that, a tossing and tumbling the things about, and that often without any intention of buying, a buzzing noise, a checkered croud, a number of lookers on, and few purchasers. Many are pleased, and many vexed; enough

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is eaten, and very often too much is drank. The inns and public-houses are as full as they can hold; and the innocent, unsuspecting countryman is often the dupe of gamblers, jugglers, and mountebanks, who seem to think they have a privilege for cheating on such days. The parlours of the parsonage, the justice of peace's house, and those of the principal inhabitants, are crowded with genteel people; and there is such a confused noise in them, that it is hardly possible to distinguish the sound of one's own voice, with asking questions, giving answers, and relating what has happened—with the rattling of tea-cups and saucers, and the ringing of glasses—with loud exclamations, horse-laughs, and various kinds of jests. This is the case at most fairs, and thus it was at Penstone.

A large company, chiefly consisting of clergymen and wealthy farmers and their families, who lived in the neighbourhood of Penstone, were assembled at the par-

sonage there, where was likewise Mr. Watson, the justice of the peace, his wife, and some of his friends. The reason of Mr. Watson's going to the parsonage that afternoon, was on account of its being in the market-place, and his house at the end of the town, where but little of the pleasures of the day could be seen. They had therefore settled their plan in the following manner: Mr. Watson and his friends were to drink tea at the parsonage, and remain there till dusk, and then the clergyman and his company were to go with him to his house to supper.

Mrs. Watson, two other ladies, and Mr. Thornton, a young man of fortune, who lived a few miles from Penstone, stood at the open window, and amused themselves with looking at what passed in the street, and making remarks on what they said and heard, till Mrs. Watson exclaimed with a look of surprise—"Well, this is marvellous indeed!—see, there is Willing and his daughter coming down the street!"

"That

"That is a miracle!" replied one of the ladies. "Where are they?"

Her informer pointed to the place, and Thornton looked, as well as the rest, to see the strange phenomenon, with a palpitating heart; not that the persons mentioned were strange to him, for he had been in company with Miss Willing once or twice, and had seen her father several times at different places; the latter he regarded as a good sort of man, but the former as the loveliest and most amiable girl he had ever seen in his life, and there was nothing he so earnestly desired as to cultivate an acquaintance with her, which he hoped would lead to something more: but with the utmost stretch of imagination it was impossible for him to guess why their coming to Penstone that day should be regarded as a wonder, and he was not sufficiently acquainted with either of the ladies to make any enquiries about it; but the following remarks that they made immediately after let him into the secret.

"She is a pretty girl to be sure, but I would rather be homely than what she is," was said by one, who certainly could not make any pretensions to beauty.

Thornton gasped for breath, and hastily enquired what she was?

"A pretty girl!" replied the lady with a smile.

"That she certainly is," returned Thornton. "But what else?" And he coloured as he spoke, as if he was afraid that his impetuosity had betrayed the secret of his heart.

"She is very genteel, and her face would be handsome if she was not so pale ———"

"Pale!" said another, interrupting her; "the restlessness of her mind, that thinks of nothing but scratching and scraping together, is the cause of it—stingy people are seldom fresh-coloured."

The young man started back as if a viper had stung him; for the mildness of Fanny Willing's manners, her modest deportment,

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the charms of her person, and sensible conversation, had pleased him so much the few times he had been in company with her, that there was nothing he so ardently wished as to call her his; and he had secretly determined (as he was entirely independent and master of his actions) to make proposals of marriage to her; for he had heard, and her behaviour strengthened him in the belief, that her hand and heart were entirely free. How painful must it therefore have been to him to hear the report of her excessive avarice, which had hitherto deterred him from making a declaration, on which he fancied the happiness of his future life depended, confirmed by a woman who, although rather talkative, was neither malicious nor an inventor of scandal. But how did his heart bleed when he heard Mrs. Watson continue as follows:—

"I, however, would not say a word about it, as it is impossible to know if people's circumstances may not make some degree of parsimony necessary, if

if her worthy father was not such a sufferer by it. He has a good living, this girl is his only child, and yet he has hardly a shilling at his own disposal. When he goes out, they give him a trifling sum in his pocket, and when he comes home, he is obliged to account to them how he has laid it out; and I am sorry to say that the girl is worse than her mother. He is a good-humoured man, a jovial companion, loves company, and would be glad to see his friends if they would let him; but nobody is admitted into his house, nor do they ever visit any body. If they go any where, it is only a call, for they never eat or drink any thing, or, at least, never more than a dish of tea, that they may have an excuse for not treating again; and when the evening approaches, they are tiresome beyond expression, with their hurrying, anxiety to be gone, and the recapitulation of the thousand things they have to do at home; nor is there any peace till the father takes up his hat, and goes away with them. I always pity the poor hen-

pecked

pecked old man at such times, who visibly sacrifices his inclination to their will; for he loves a good table and glass of wine, and always tears himself away with reluctance. But they are inflexible, and he being a peaceable man, suffers himself to be entirely guided by their will. This is the reason that makes it impossible for me to guess what brought them to the fair today.

Thornton endeavoured to offer some reasons that might serve as excuses for their conduct, but he was silenced by Mrs. Watson's saying—"Well, you shall judge yourself. Willing does not live above a mile from here, the days are long, and the evenings fine, and as we sup early, they may go away before ten o'clock; besides, we will offer to send them home in our carriage, and you shall see if the daughter will let her father stay to supper. But to-night she shall not have her will, if we can help it—we will keep him in spite of her if we can."

She left the window with those words,

called her husband aside, and with a thoughtlessness that is not uncommon to people who are not bad themselves, when they wish to vex or punish those who they think are so, she informed him in a whisper what means she would have him use to keep old Willing. He laughed at the joke, called it a good one, and promised to do what she desired.

A few minutes after, Willing and his daughter entered the room. The faint blush that tinged the lovely maiden's cheeks when she saw so much company, increased her beauty, and it was impossible to look at her without admiring the elegance of her form, the regularity of her features, the mild lustre of her eyes, and the inexpressible charm that was diffused over her whole person. But none of the company regarded her with the rapture that Thornton did; his eye was fixed on her's, and he listened to every word she uttered with attention and pleasure.

Willing was regarded as an object of pity, every one flocked round him, asked him a number of questions, and overwhelmed him with assurances of friendship, and the satisfaction that the sight of him gave to every one. The warm reception that was given the father formed a striking contrast to the chilling coldness with which the daughter was treated; for all the notice that was taken of her, consisted in a few formal questions that were asked her at different times, laconic replies, and a number of inquisitive and disapproving looks.

The conversation turned on household concerns, and she endeavoured to join in it; but whatever she said was contradicted, and the ladies several times replied in a scornful manner—"Lord, Miss, who would be so saving!"—Or, "I declare such a thing would never have entered my head!" Fanny coloured and was silent, for she began to think that the prudent manner in which her excellent mother managed her family might be on too economical a plan

to

to be mentioned in a mixed company, and she blamed herself for having done so; but she could not help feeling the harshness of the reproofs that were given her, and the unkindness with which she was treated.

Inattention and unkindness harrass the hearts of those who are convinced that they are unmerited, but they quicken the pulses, and make the blood circulate faster. It is therefore by no means uncommon for those persons who are neglected in company, to exert their endeavours to prove themselves agreeable and entertaining to any one who may be disposed to listen to them, and this was likewise the case with Fanny when Thornton addressed himself to her, and he found her sentiments so just, her sense so refined, and her opinion to coincide so entirely with his own, that her understanding fettered his heart still more than her beauty. He watched every expression of her countenance with a scrutinizing eye, without being able to discover a single trait of coldness or apathy, which are the constant compa-

companions of avarice, except in her coral lips, which timidly only half-opened when she spoke. At any other time he would have attributed it to its real cause, modesty, but, unluckily at that moment, he recollected the old adage of—" A close mouth being a sign of a close heart." That thought made him shudder, and the state of his mind exactly resembled a sick person's who is afraid of death, and wishes to recover, whose hopes are easily raised, and often damped by the veriest trifle, as soon as they have attained their highest pitch. Thus Thornton listened, gazed, and alternately hoped and feared.

Fanny at last opened her work-bag, and took out her knitting.

" O fie, Miss," said a lady in a satirical manner; " who, except yourself, would think of working on a fair-day? And I dare say you have no occasion to do so! I warrant your presses and drawers are all full!"

Fanny, under pretence of looking at something that passed in the street, bent her

her head out of the window, and, unobserved by every one in the room, except Thornton, drew out her pocket-handkerchief and wiped away a tear. She soon returned to her seat with a cheerful countenance, and resumed her work as if nothing had happened.

Her admirer was as much surprised at the patience with which she bore unmerited ill usage, as at the stability of mind she shewed in persevering in her intention, and not suffering herself to be deterred from it by a rude and unmeaning jest. He was delighted at both, but something happened a moment after that again made his opinion waver. Seeing her father approach the window where she was sitting, she stepped towards him, drew him aside, and said to him, not in a loud voice, nor low enough not to be heard by those who were near her—"I will now go and pay two or three visits in town, and execute the commissions my mother charged me with. I shall return in an hour, it will then be about seven o'clock, and if you please, my dear father, we

we will go home as soon as I come back. Will you wait for me here?"

Her father nodded assent, then returned to the company, and informed them of his and his daughter's intention; but every one objected to their returning home so soon, and entreated them to stay to supper. The invitation was pressing, but various were the reasons that Fanny alledged, and the excuses she made for not doing so. Not a word nor gesture of her's escaped Thornton's notice; and he alternately admired and wondered at the politeness of her refusals; the artful and studied manner in which she evaded proposals that hardly admitted of an objection; the respectful terms in which she reminded her father of the business, that did not admit of delay, which was to be done at home; the uneasiness her countenance expressed at the old man's indetermination, or rather, visible inclination to stay; and the steadiness with which she adhered to her first resolution, from which she never wavered.

As

As soon as she was gone, Watson and the rest of the company surrounded Willing, and renewed the invitation. He at first made some objections, but they were easily obviated.

"We have not spent a comfortable evening together these many years," said the justice of the peace. "You should not give up all society in the manner you do. This is a select party of your old and intimate friends. We are all glad to see you; and if you do not stay we shall regard it as an affront. The crowd is beginning to disperse, and as there is not much more to be seen, we men will go to my house, and smoke a pipe and drink a bottle before supper, and the ladies may follow us when they please. I have a bed at your service," continued he; "and you will really oblige me by accepting it; but if you persist in your intention of going back to-night, John shall drive you home at what hour you please. There are people enough here out of your village; we will send word by them

to

to your wife not to wait supper for you; and if your daughter cannot be prevailed on to stay, she can go back with them."

Willing smiled; and after a few more faint excuses, which were not admitted, his consent was gained. The gentlemen shook his hand, clapped his shoulder and back to testify their pleasure, and Watson and his male friends led him away in a kind of triumph. Thornton remained at the parsonage with the ladies.

Fanny Willing returned at the time she had appointed, and turned as pale as ashes when she heard that her father was gone away with Mr. Watson and the rest of the gentlemen. She anxiously enquired if he would soon return; but nothing could equal her uneasiness when she was told that her father had promised to spend the evening with them, and that he did not intend to leave town till ten o'clock. The flurry she was in (for it was impossible for her to conceal the perturbation of her mind), the intention she once or twice expressed of going

going to fetch her father back, and the impatience with which she ran to the street-door and back again into the parlour, as if she wished to hasten the ladies departure by doing so, was remarked by them with an ill-natured smile, and many unkind speeches when she was out of hearing.

Thornton observed it as well as the rest, but it operated on him in a different manner. He enquired, in a very delicate manner, what the reason of her uneasiness was? and her answer convinced him that there was something she wished to conceal, although it was evident, by her manner of speaking, that she was conscious that no part of her own conduct required concealment. She hastened into the street, Thornton followed her at a little distance, and saw her suddenly start back, and raise up her arms with a faint scream. He hastened towards her, and seized hold of her hand, for she was so violently agitated that he was afraid she would fall.

"For God's sake, Madam, what is the

matter with you?" said he. She sighed and pointed with her finger, and melancholy indeed was the sight he saw—Willing, reeling down the street in a condition that was highly unbecoming his age and function. The jovial company, good wine, and his natural propensity, had induced him to drink one glass after the other with eager haste; a faint recollection of his daughter, who, he supposed, was waiting for him at the parsonage, at last occurred to him; and, without mentioning his intention, he hastened out of the house to go there to meet her, nor did he feel the effects of the wine till he came into the air.

"Help! O help me!" exclaimed Fanny, bursting into a flood of tears. "It is impossible for me to conceal from you the situation my father is in. Thank God, there are but few people in the street at present, and, I believe, none who know him—do, pray, Sir, assist me in leading him into the arbour in the garden; we will go in at the back gate, that he may be seen as little as possible."

possible." He did so, and they conducted the old man to a bench, where he fell asleep as soon as he was seated.—Fanny then desired Thornton to add to the obligations she already owed him, that of procuring a carriage, as secretly as possible, to convey her father home; and she then continued, rather less sorrowfully, but as mildly as before—" This, Sir, is the reason of the many mortifying innuendos you have heard to-day of my mother's and my insupportable avarice; for why should I endeavour to conceal what my fears and the unfortunate confirmation of them have, alas! too plainly revealed to you? Scenes of this kind, the last happened about two years ago, determined us to wean my father from company as much as possible, and to fetter him to his home by our care and attention. But I conjure you, Sir, (she burst into a fresh flood of tears as she spoke) not to think ill of my dear father on this account.—I assure you, he is one of the best men that ever lived, and his only fault

is,

is, that he sometimes forgets himself in cheerful company."

Thornton executed Fanny's commissions with the utmost expedition and punctuality. He called Mrs. Watson aside, informed her what had happened, and then hastened to her husband to ask for the carriage. Mrs. Watson went into the garden to Fanny, and asked her pardon for the erroneous opinion she had entertained of her, and the rudeness of her behaviour, which was the consequence of it. Fanny tenderly embraced her, owned that appearances were against her mother and herself, and then begged she would leave her, for she said she was certain it would be very painful to her father if he awoke, and knew to a certainty that she had seen him in a state that he himself abhorred. Thornton ordered the carriage to the garden gate of the parsonage, and conducted the old man and his daughter home.

The nap that Willing had taken, and vexation that his child, and shame that a

 stranger,

stranger, had witnessed his weakness, dissipated the fumes of the liquor he had drank before he reached home, and enabled Fanny to conceal the most vexatious part of the affair from her mother's knowledge. The evening was spent pleasantly enough; but none of the party was so happy as Thornton, who had joyfully accepted of Mr. and Mrs. Willing's invitation to sup and sleep at their house, as it was late.

He attentively observed every thing in the house, and all that passed in it; but instead of meanness and avarice, all he saw bore the marks of order, propriety, affluence, and elegant simplicity. The parlour was ornamented with some beautiful drawings, which, upon enquiry, Thornton found to be the work of Fanny's leisure hours; and a harpsichord that stood in the room, naturally made him enquire if she played? "A little," replied she. "My father is fond of music, and I sometimes play to amuse him."

After supper, Thornton requested her to oblige

oblige him with an air or two; and her father desired her to sing the last new songs that her uncle had lately sent her. She executed both in a masterly manner, to the no small surprise of the young man, who had not the least idea of her being mistress of such elegant accomplishments. The next morning, after breakfast, he begged the favour of her to take a walk in the garden with him, and he then made her an offer of his hand and heart. Fanny, who had not the least suspicion of his intention, trembled and blushed, but was incapable of speaking.

"Will you allow me to interpret your silence in my favour, charming Fanny?" said he, kissing her hand with rapture.—"If you do not forbid me, I will this instant go to your father, and beg of him to intercede for me.—Dare I?"—Fanny was silent. "Forgive my vanity," continued he, "and allow me to think that silence gives consent!"

Fanny blushed, and Thornton hurried to

the house, and asked her parents to bestow their daughter's hand on him. They, who were well acquainted with his character and fortune, replied that they had no objection, if the proposal was agreeable to her; and that very afternoon he kissed the assurance of reciprocal love, and the promise that she would be his, from her trembling lips: and a kind embrace of the mother's, who was not a little proud of her future son-in-law, and a hearty shake of the hand that was given him by the father, accompanied by the promise of his being more on his guard for the future, rendered him the happiest of men, and cemented and embellished the pleasing band that Love and Esteem had united.

THE SISTERS.

"YES, she is handsomer!" were the words with which a young man, who I merely knew by sight, addressed himself to me one evening, just as I, after a pleasant walk in the refreshing evening air, was going to step into a jasmine arbour in one of the royal gardens, to admire at my ease the beauty of the setting sun. The voice proceeded from the arbour, and repeated, as I advanced a step further, in a more positive manner than before—" Yes, she is handsomer—upon my honour she is!"

is!" And he looked as confused when he saw me, as if he had just been tossed out of the moon, and tumbled upon the earth.—"I beg your pardon, Sir," said he; "I thought it was Amford, with whom I have just had a little dispute. He left the arbour a few minutes ago, and I supposed it was him who was returning."

"But will you permit me," returned I, "to enquire who the handsomest of the two ladies is?"

"How is it possible to ask such a question?" replied he in a hasty manner. "Why, it is as plain as the sun at noon-day that Teresa is handsomer than her sister Jemima. Don't you think so? Such silky flaxen tresses, lovely as Eve's, that fall in natural ringlets over her alabaster neck, such meek and languishing blue eyes——but look, there he comes!"

I turned my head, and perceived Amford at a little distance in a shady walk, and seemingly in a profound reverie. He approached the spot where we were sitting, with

with slow and measured steps and folded arms, and called to his friend before he was near enough to see me—“ You may say what you will to the contrary, Jemima is the handsomest!” As soon as he perceived me, he pulled off his hat, and said—“ Excuse me, Sir, I thought Dawson was alone; but as you are here, you shall decide our dispute. You certainly know the two Miss Gardeners. Is Teresa or Jemima the handsomest? Teresa is fair, Jemima is a brunette; to which of them do you assign the palm of beauty?”

I replied that I was too little acquainted with the ladies to be able to answer such an important question properly, but that they certainly both were very handsome.

“ I perceive you do not chuse to answer it, and that we must settle the difference between ourselves as well as we can,” said he.

The two friends then renewed the dispute with so much warmth, and each defended his arguments so ably, that I listened

to them with pleasure, without interfering any further in the friendly contest. They both appealed to history, to mythology, to the rules of the fine arts, to the received opinion, to the manner in which poets and painters describe and represent Venus, and the judgment of connoisseurs. Each of them warmly defended his tenet, and they both of them displayed much learning, and much love, in the discussion of the point in question; and they at last went so far as to compute the degree of cultivation, and assert that the peculiarities of whole nations, as well as the merits and faults of their writers, in a great measure depended on the colour of the womens' complexions.

"I take it for granted, Sir," said Amford, turning to me, "that you have read the works of the best French and Italian authors, and does not almost every page of their works prove that they were inspired by black-eyed beauty?"

"O, I am glad you are there," replied

his

his friend; "it will be hard indeed if I cannot match you in this respect. If you appeal to the French and Italian poets, I will to the English and German;—think of their wisdom, extent, depth of sensibility, penetration, and the all-enquiring, all-compassing spirit that breathes in their performances, and remember that Albion's and Germania's sons, as often, if not oftener, tuned their lyre in praise of the blue-eyed maid, as to that of the browner beauty."

The friends loosened the reins of imagination, and finding the airy flight not disagreeable, they amused themselves some time with making general observations.—They, however, at last let their opinions drop, and returned to the original cause of their dispute—the difference in their opinions about the beauty of the two sisters; but neither of them could convince his antagonist of his being in the right, and they continued the dispute till Dawson looked at his watch, and said—"What fools we are!—Come, let us go, our hour is expired; and

and if nothing else can convince you, look at Teresa, and let occular demonstration do so."

Whether the young men convinced each other of his being in the wrong, or if either of them wished in earnest that the other might adopt his opinion, are matters hardly worth enquiring about; and instead of doing so, I will endeavour to make my readers better acquainted with the amiable causes of their dispute. Teresa and Jemima were the greatest treasures that their worthy father, Counsellor Gardener, possessed, and he divided his love so impartially between them, and was so remarkably fond of both, that comparisons and examinations of the kind that passed between Amford and his friend, had certainly never once entered his head. They were very like their mother, an exceeding handsome woman, who died young; and few sisters ever resembled each other so strongly as they did. Their size, the elegance of their shapes, the vermillion of their lips, beauty of their teeth,

arched eyebrows, and long silky lashes, that pleasingly shaded their mild expressive, or beautiful sparkling eyes, were exactly alike; and the year that Teresa was older than her sister, was so little visible in her youthful countenance, that a painter might have mistaken one for the other, if Jemima's hair and eyes had not been dark brown, the colour of her father's. Both bloomed as lovely as a pair of twin lilies on the same stalk, whose opening charms were unfolded by the sun on the same morning; but the beauty of their persons, although great, was nothing, when compared to the loveliness of their minds, where every virtue reigned triumphant.

It was the happy lot of two friends to discover these treasures at the same time, and to receive the most convincing proofs of their merits by chance, and at a moment when one of them at least thought herself concealed from the observation of every eye. Amford and Dawson, two young men of fortune, who had been intimate friends at college, but

had not, as they were settled in different parts of the country, seen each other since, accidentally met in the capital, where Gardener resided. Each of them came to consult with him, as a man of known skill and integrity, on some law business that regarded themselves; and they had each of them visited the counsellor several times, little thinking of what had often happened, that one of them had hardly left the house when the other entered it. They, however, at last had the inexpressible pleasure of meeting there; and they immediately renewed their former friendship, and generally spent their evenings together. Whenever they went to the counsellor's, the servant always shewed them into his room; and when they went away, he usually attended them to the street-door himself: they had never been in any other room, and were as ignorant of the treasures the house contained, as a boy, who is bathing, is of the costly pearls that are inclosed in the muscle shell which his feet glide over; but in the same day,

day, and almost the same hour, the two friends were fortunate enough to find these invaluable pearls; and the following letter of Amford's to a friend in the country, will shew how much he was affected and pleased with what he saw and heard;—

"Dear Jack,

"I am in love—absolutely in love! and that I believe more violently than ever man was before! But I know you will stare at this rhapsody, and not believe one word of it; but I beg of you to read deliberately what follows, and you will then find that I never in my life was less inclined to jest than I am at present.

"You know the business that brought me to town, and my intention of consulting Counsellor Gardener about it. I did so, and found him quite the honest, obliging man he was represented to me. There is a person, who lives in a village some miles

miles from here, who Gardener thinks can inform me of some particulars about the estate in question, that are necessary for me to know; and as they are of consequence, he politely offered to accompany me to him, and every thing was settled for our going to-morrow morning. I was at his house to-day; have been there very often, without ever being fortunate enough to see his charming daughter. About two hours ago, I happened to think of something that required his advice before we went, and I called at his house, as I had often done before at the same time; but he was gone out. I enquired of the maid when she expected her master back? She did not know. I then asked her if she could tell me where he was gone to, as I very much wished to speak a few words with him? 'If you will go to that corner house, Sir,' said she, pointing to a tavern at a little distance on the other side of the way, 'you will find my master and one of the misses there; they are gone to a ball.

I am

I am sorry I cannot go and call him; but I am quite alone at home, for the other young lady and my fellow-servant went out just now.'

"I wished to speak to the counsellor, and therefore went where the maid told me I should find him. I remembered afterwards that he had once informed me, in the course of conversation, that he had some business with a corporation of tradesmen, and that they always gave two or three entertainments every year, which he, and some of his friends, made it a rule to go to; and when there was a ball, he usually took one or both of his daughters with him.

"The number of lights made it impossible for me to mistake the house, and they, and the sound of the music, guided me to the ball-room. Nobody took any notice of me as I entered, not even she whose image has ever since been present to my mind. The room was small, and very much crouded; and I observed that most of the company looked ruffled, and out of

 humour.

humour. Some whispered, others muttered their disapprobation of something that had just happened, loud enough to be heard; and Miss Gardener (who is the object of my affection) was endeavouring to restore the peace, that a proud and thoughtless girl had interrupted. I was too near, and my attention too deeply engaged, not to take particular notice of every thing that passed; not a word, nor a look, escaped my observation.

"The lovely girl stood before a young man, who was plainly, but genteelly, dressed, and whose appearance bespoke a creditable tradesman; his face glowed with anger, and tears seemed ready to start into his eyes. With a gentleness in her manners that would have humanized a savage, and a face in which goodness of heart, pity, modesty, a no small degree of confusion, and the desire to conceal what had just happened from the knowledge of every one, was strongly marked with a blush, that shewed the warmth of her feelings, and

how

how much they were interested, and a supplicating look, that I am convinced I could not have withstood, let her have desired what she would of me, she offered the young man her hand, with these words—'Do, Sir, go down this dance with me. I know Miss Williams dislikes this dance. She really did not intend to affront you—upon my word, she did not; and if she had thought you would have taken her refusal ill, I am sure she would have complied with your request. Do oblige me—Come, they are waiting for us.'

"Now, my friend, I am certain you will cease to wonder at my love at first sight, and no longer doubt what you and I have so often laughed at, and declared an impossibility. You know there is nothing provokes me so much as the supercilious impertinent airs that proud and ill-bred people frequently give themselves, when they are in company with those whom they fancy their inferiors, without thinking of the pain they give; and is it not therefore

very

very natural for me to be delighted with the girl whose sentiments in that respect so entirely correspond with mine? The respect is due to the man, and not to the fineness of the cloth, the fashionable cut, nor the gold or tinsel with which his coat is trimmed; and that my dear girl did so, her behaviour plainly shewed.—My dear girl! presumptuous wretch that I am; who knows if I shall ever be happy enough to call her by that tender appellation?—But let me hope the best. The young man seemed to wish to refuse her request, but had not courage to do so; he therefore, half-reluctantly and half-pleased, joined in the dance with her. 'That's right!—that's right!' was repeated by several voices at the same time; and some young people clapped their hands together for joy. 'A proud upstart minx, to refuse to dance with an honest tradesman,' said an old man to his neighbour; 'and every one knows that trade has a golden bottom. I believe, between you and I, if every one had their

own,

own, that Johnstone would have more left than her father: but the counsellor's daughter has made him, and the whole company, amends for the affront that the insolence of her behaviour gave; and I will tell you what we will do, to shew our regard for her and her family, when she marries, we will make her a present of a handsome piece of plate.

"I remained rivetted to the spot I stood on, and had forgot the counsellor, my business with him, and every thing except the lovely girl, when an acquaintance of mine tapped me on the shoulder, expressed his surprise at seeing me there, and asked me if I knew what had just happened? I replied in the affirmative, and told him I wanted to speak to Mr. Gardener. 'I will shew you where he is—He is in another room,' said my friend; and continued as we went along—'Miss Gardener is a charming, sensible girl—don't you think so? And, I assure you, if she had not acted in the prudent manner she did, the other girl's pride

pride and rudeness would have caused a disturbance, that might have been attended with disagreeable consequences, or at least have interrupted the pleasure of the evening.'

"Your daughter is a delightful girl! were the terms I would have chosen to address myself to the father in; but as I felt the impropriety of doing so, I hardly know what I said. The worthy man stared at me, and he several times desired me to repeat my words, as he said he did not rightly comprehend my meaning. His not doing so was by no means surprising, as I was unintelligible even to myself. My mind was filled with a single idea, and every thing else was foreign to my thoughts. I fancied he knew that his daughter was the cause of my confusion, and that he would mention what had just happened, which, however, to my no small mortification, he did not, but confined himself merely to my affairs, and informed me of what

what I wanted to know in a much plainer manner than I had made my enquiries.

"He, and several other persons, pressed me to spend the evening there, which I unfortunately could not do, for some business, that did not admit of delay, obliged me to write to my attorney by to-night's post; but I am afraid my letter will not by any means prove a masterpiece of accuracy, and I shall think myself fortunate if he is able to divine my meaning, for my head is a very chaos. How my heart palpitates when I think of my journey to-morrow, which, I hope, will prove of infinite service to me; for I shall certainly find an opportunity of hinting to Mr. Gardener, as we go along, in a polite and unassuming manner, the pleasure his company gives me, and how much I wish to be introduced to his family, and more intimately acquainted with him. That, I think, will induce him to take me home with him, and I shall then see the idol of my heart!—shall see her, my friend—and how supremely happy

shall

shall I esteem myself, if my endeavours to please her should prove successful! One thing in my favour is, that fortune will not prove an impediment to my happiness, for although her father lives in a genteel style, he is by no means rich, and when he dies his income dies with him. Heaven send that I may meet with no other obstacle, and that neither a favoured lover, nor my own unworthiness, may stand in my way, and make me miserable.

"Farewell, dear Jack; may my next letter inform you that she loves, and that I am "Your happy,

"AMFORD."

Some hours later, the same evening, a second letter was written, in which Jemima appears to as much advantage as Amford represented her sister Teresa; and as we think it will amuse our readers, we will with pleasure communicate it to them.

Dawson

Dawson to his Friend.

"What an alteration, my friend, can a few hours sometimes produce in our sentiments! I was cold, torpid, and indifferent to every thing that surrounded me, a few hours ago, and I now feel myself inspired with inclination and power to attempt the most difficult or tiresome employments without murmuring. The apathy under which my mind laboured, is changed into the warmest philanthropy, and I am pleased with the world and every thing in it. A girl—an angelic girl, has wrought this wonderful change in your friend—a change that will mark the most important period of my life, and either diffuse unutterable happiness, or inexpressible misery on me.

"About seven o'clock this evening, tired with long sitting, and the disagreeable occu-

occupation of looking over, and comparing the dates of old leases, bonds, bills, and a number of dry and uninteresting *etceteras* of the same kind, that had engaged my attention the whole day, and almost stupified me, I determined to take a walk in the town, as I frequently do in the evenings. The stars twinkled, and some snow that had fallen in the afternoon, made it light enough for me to discern every object at a little distance. The air was rather fresh than cold, and I breathed so freely in it after having been cooped up the greatest part of the day in a small close room, as a bird that is just escaped from its cage. I soon left the principal streets, turned into narrower ones, and at last into a lane, which seemed to be inhabited by the lowest classes of people, and amused myself with looking through the window, as I passed by them.

"Perhaps you remember that I always found a peculiar pleasure in watching, unobserved, what was passing in the humble dwel-

lings of the poor? I never feel the least curiosity to know what is doing in the habitations of the opulent; but a cobler, at work by the light of a fuming lamp in his low and littered chamber, or a weaver at his loom, throwing his shuttles, or an old woman at her spinning-wheel, or a father and mother surrounded by a numerous family supping on boiled potatoes, or bread and cheese, and a pot of beer, are objects that always meet my attention, and I could look at them for hours together without being weary. I walked slowly along the street, and my mind was occupied with thinking that, perhaps, more industrious, contented, indigent, and unfortunate people, dwelt in it, than in any other part of the town, when a well-dressed female, and a maid with a lanthorn, passed by me in a hasty manner. I followed them with my eyes, and saw them enter one of the miserable hovels at a little distance from me. The lady was tall, and by the momentary glimpse I had of her face,

as she passed me, I perceived she was handsome. That excited my curiosity (which, however, the undisguisedness of her manner made less impertinent than it would otherwise have been) to know what business a young and beautiful female could have at that late hour in the abode of poverty and wretchedness. I mended my pace, and came up to the house at the moment she entered it. The window-shutters were open, and a lamp stood upon a table in the corner of a room, which afforded me an opportunity of seeing, as a little attention did of hearing, all that passed in it. I could not resist the temptation, and (do not be angry with me) stopped, and listened; but, was I to live to the age of Methusalem, I am sure I shall never forget the scene that passed.

"Good actions do not require concealment, and virtuous persons are seldom afraid of being overheard, while the dishonest, the impure, the slanderous, and suspicious, think they cannot cautiously

enough

enough examine their bolts, windows, and keyholes; besides, the good people that I allude to were so much engaged with what passed in the room, that their thoughts did not wander beyond it; and the broken window, and the silence that reigned in the street, enabled me to hear almost every word that was said, and by combining circumstances, I could easily supply the few that were lost. The loneliness of the place was likewise in my favour, for no passers by, to whom I should have been ashamed to appear in the character of a listener, scared me away. It is impossible to defend listening, which is always wrong, but this time my motive was innocent, and as it was productive of good, I hope it will admit of some excuse; however, be that as it may, I cannot, was I to be hanged for it, repent having done so; but, I suppose, my long preamble has raised your curiosity by this time, and I will therefore hasten to gratify it.

"A young woman, exceeding pale,

whose dress, although very mean, was neither dirty nor ragged, sat in a broken arm-chair, near the few sparks of fire there was in the grate, when an old woman, whose resemblance informed me she was her mother, entered the room with the strange lady, and exclaimed, in a joyful manner—'Only think, Jenny, here is Miss come to see you herself!' The young woman raised her languid eyes, and faintly articulated—'God bless her!' She then gasped for breath, but continued, after a short pause—'How good it is of you, dear Miss, to visit me in my affliction! but you, and your sister, were always good to me, and I hope Heaven will reward you for it! But what did you say when you heard of my misfortune? I am sure you pitied me! It was hard indeed to be deprived of my dear husband before I had been married quite a year! Such an honest and industrious man—such a tender husband! He never said a cross word to me in his life. Oh my God!'—The poor creature burst into tears, which

which she had long with difficulty restrained, as she pronounced the last words.

"The old woman ran up to her daughter, threw her arm round her neck, and raised her fore finger in a significant manner. The widow shuddered, hastily dried her eyes with a corner of her apron, and continued, after a long pause—'Nor dare I even ease my mind by crying, and it would often, when my heart feels as if it was bursting, be a great relief to me; but my mother says, the dead cannot rest in their grave as long as the living mourn for them; I therefore strive to get the better of my grief as much as I can, but it is too much for me at times, and will break out, let me do what I will to prevent it.' With a look that bespoke sympathy, meekness, and benevolence, such as artists endeavour to make the features of Pity express, the lovely stranger wiped her eyes, approached the unfortunate sufferer, took hold of one of her hands, which she pressed between both her's, and said—'Oh, do not let that pre-

 vent

vent your tears from flowing!—Sorrow cannot reach the place where your husband is! If crying is a relief to you, do not strive to restrain your tears; but I hope the Almighty will soon dry them, and comfort you!'

'Alas! I fear that time is far distant!' replied the poor widow, clasping her hands, and raising her languid eyes to Heaven, with a look that forcibly expressed the anguish of her heart, and then, as if overcome by weakness, she sunk back in her chair, and was silent. 'I fear so too!' said the old woman; 'but, dear young lady, you do not know half our misfortunes yet! My son-in-law died a month before my daughter was brought-to-bed, and his illness and burial cost us a great deal of money;—neither of us was able to earn much, and we were obliged to sell almost all we had to buy bread;—and only think of our distress when she was delivered of twins!—they are the prettiest little puppets you ever saw in your life; many a Lord would

give

give thousands if he had them; and God forgive me for wishing they belonged to somebody who could keep them better than we can; for the sight of them adds to our distress.'—' And yet I would not part with them for all the treasures the world contains,'' said the tender mother. The young lady again applied her pocket-handkerchief to her eyes, and in a voice that proved how much she wished to comfort, and how sincerely she sympathized in their affliction, said—' I have often heard that twins bring a blessing with them! Do not despair, good people; God Almighty is all-sufficient, and will certainly help you—he will not desert the widow and orphans who put their trust in him.'

' That I know he will not,' said the young woman. ' I rely on him.'

' And so do I,' replied her mother; ' and we have already experienced his help. The apothecary would not take any money for the physic I fetched for my daughter yesterday; and this evening a neighbour sent

 her

her a bason of caudle, or she would have gone supperless to bed. But you have not seen Tommy and Nancy yet.'

"She then fetched one after the other, and the lovely stranger alternately fondled the sleeping infants, which had an effect on me that I am utterly incapable of describing. I have often remarked the squeamishness, or a certain kind of false delicacy, with which young women often turn away from children, as if they were objects undeserving their notice, or as if they thought there was an impropriety in their shewing any fondness; but, far removed from such ridiculous affectation, the amiable maiden, with a purity of mind that would do honour to a vestal, kissed and pressed the infants to her bosom several times, with these words—'They are indeed the loveliest babes I ever saw! I hope they will live, and be a comfort to you both!'

'God preserve them,' replied the old woman; 'they are fine healthy children, and

and seem as if they would do well, although they were born in poverty and sorrow.'

'But why,' said the stranger, 'did you not apply for assistance to those who were willing and able to relieve you? Why did you not come to us? I am angry with you for not doing so.'

'I often advised my daughter to do so,' returned the old woman; 'but she would not consent to it.'

'Indeed, the thought of being troublesome to others was very painful to me,' said the widow; 'and I always think that those who are richer than we are, want more; besides, when one is accustomed to maintain oneself by our own industry, it is very hard to ask charity of others.'

"Who, my friend, would have expected to find such noble sentiments and genuine worth concealed in such a remote corner of the world? And merit like this is often reduced to want, and deprived of the common necessaries of life! How gladly would I at that moment have offered the unfortu-

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nate women the assistance that Fortune has put it in my power to do; but prudence obliged me to defer that intention till to-morrow, when I hope to do something for them, that will prevent their ever feeling the griping hand of want again.'

'You are too apprehensive, my good woman,' replied the young lady; 'there are numbers who would gladly have relieved you, had they known your wants. My sister and I were very much grieved when we heard of your distress; we talked about you all the evening, and thought of you all night. Here is some old linen, that we have made up for the children in a hurry. I hope the things will be useful to you. My sister made the greatest part of them, and she would have come with me to see you to-night, if she had not been obliged to go out with my father.' She took a bundle of linen from under her arm, whilst she was speaking, and laid it upon the table.

"It is impossible to describe the effect

that

that the unexpected relief had on the features of the distressed persons. The old woman hastily opened the bundle, and exclaimed, in accents that denoted the joy she felt—'Look, look, Jenny, here are two pretty cotton bedgowns, two blankets as good as new, four caps, and six shirts and shifts! and only see what a quantity of old linen here is! what a number of things we can make out of it! how comfortable the poor little creatures will feel when they have these fine clothes on!—pretty lambs, linen was what they wanted most.'

'Hush! hush! bye-baby-bye,' one of the children cried. 'Bye-baby-bye! you may now sleep quietly; good people have provided for your wants, before ye are able to think for yourselves.'

'God Almighty will, I hope, reward you and your sister for your goodness to me and my poor orphans!' stammered the widow; 'and for every tear of mine, bestow a blessing on you!'

"The benefactress was violently agitated; she

she seemed to wish to say something, which she was incapable of articulating, and she opened and shut her lips several times; for her endeavours to restrain the tears that started into her eye, prevented her speaking; till she at last summoned up resolution enough to say, as she put a paper, in which some money was wrapped up, that she had held between her fingers some time, into the young woman's hand—'Pray. permit me to offer you this trifle, which is hardly worth your acceptance.'

'Oh, it is too much—too much indeed!' replied she, sobbing; and then, as hastily as the weak state she was in would allow, she sprang up, clasped hold of the lovely girl's hand, and pressed it to her quivering lips, and throbbing heart.

'Indeed it is very little,' said the former, withdrawing her hand, and endeavouring to put a stop to the poor woman's effusions of gratitude; 'it is not in our power to do much: but,' continued she, turning to the old woman, 'my father desires you will

come

come to our house every day, and fetch some warm victuals for your daughter's dinner till she is quite well, and every Monday you will receive a small sum, that my sister and I can spare very well out of our weekly allowance; and, I hope, in time, we shall be able to do something more for you and your children.'

'I am incapable of expressing what I at this moment feel,' replied the widow. 'I can say—I can do nothing but pray for you!' And her uplifted hands and eyes, that were raised to Heaven, shewed with what fervour she did so. Every one wept, and, overpowered by the acuteness of my feelings, I stepped a few paces back, and dried my eyes. I returned to the window, and listened again; but the few words that were spoken afterwards were pronounced in so low a voice, and so often interrupted by sighs and tears, that it was impossible for me to hear what was said. The lovely girl took the lamp, went to the cradle, looked at the sleeping infants, pressed the

mother's

mother's and daughter's hands, and, after wishing them a good night, went away with the maid, who had stood all the time at the room door.

"As soon as I perceived her intention of going, I hastened to a considerable distance from the house, that she might not be surprised at seeing a person who she possibly might recollect having passed just before; but I could not resist the desire I felt to know who she was, and therefore followed her at a little distance; but judge of my astonishment when I saw her knock at Counsellor Gardener's door, and by the manner of her admittance, perceived she must be one of his daughters! How strange that I never saw her before, for I have visited her father a number of times, but dreamed as little of the treasure his house contained, as the miser does of the wealth that is buried in his cellar. Business was hitherto the motive of my visits, but I hope a cause more pleasing to me, will not render my future ones less agreeable to him.

"At

"At the moment she entered the house, I felt as impatient and vexed as an astronomer who, at the moment he fancies he has discovered a new world, is provoked at the unwelcome intrusion of a passing cloud, that prevents his seeing it. I stood on tiptoe upon the pavement on the opposite side of the street, and kept my eyes immoveably fixed on the parlour window. The room was light, but there did not seem to be any body in it. Miss Gardener entered it in a few moments, she stepped towards the window, pulled off her gloves and cloak, took up her work-basket, and then went towards the fire-place. I did not see her again, but my eye rested for a considerable time on the shadow that her head reflected on the wainscot of the back part of the room.—Thus ended my adventure, but the remembrance of it will live in my mind as long as life and memory lasts; and that I love her, and never will marry another, is as certain as that my blood circulates, and my pulses beat. My heart is infinitely

more charmed with her than my eye; for handsome as she seems to be, (I say seems, for the darkness of the room I saw her in, prevents my asserting that she is really so), her beauty alone would not have captivated me in the powerful manner that the higher charms of her mind has done; and I am certain that if she is as plain as I believe her to be the reverse, I shall love her just as well as I do at present.

"To-morrow I will pay her father a visit, but, unluckily for me, I cannot go till evening, for he is engaged to spend the day with Amford in the country, who, you know, I told you in a former letter, I had met quite unexpectedly here, after a separation of several years. But I will watch the Counsellor's return, and go to his house the moment he enters it. I envy Amford the happiness of spending the day with my adorable girl's father; for who can tell, as he is a sensible and agreeable man, if he may not insinuate himself into his favour, and rob me of her. I wonder if he

he has seen her? He has never mentioned her to me, but he may artfully avoid doing so, to prevent my endeavouring to get a sight of her. I called on him this evening, after I returned from my walk, but found him so busied with writing, that I did not stay long. I hope he does not know her; but he spoke of his journey to-morrow in such a significant manner, and his answers to my enquiries about it were so laconic and confused, that I really do not know what to make of him—there certainly was a something that he wished to conceal from me—what can it be! But there is a possibility that my jealousy may exaggerate the little alteration in his behaviour, that his being disturbed in writing might cause, and make me fancy it of more importance than it really was. The Counsellor has another daughter, and, I am sure, by the mention my charming girl made of her, the sisters must be kindred minds. I hope she is the handsomest of the two, and that Amford will fall in love with her, and make

no

no pretensions to the one who will ever reign unrivalled in my heart. To-morrow evening my doom will be fixed; adieu till then.—I can think of nothing distinctly but to-morrow!

"I am ever your

"DAWSON."

The next morning, at the appointed hour, the carriage which first took up Gardener, stopped at the hotel where Amford lodged. Amford had been ready some time, and stood at the window to watch its coming. He hurried down stairs as soon as he saw it, and (who can describe the ecstatic pleasure he felt!) saw the lovely Jemima seated by her father's side. As soon as the first salutations were over, the Counsellor said—"I hope, Sir, you will excuse my taking my daughter with me, but a friend of her's lives in the village we are going to, and as the morning is fine, she

she with pleasure embraced the opportunity of paying her a visit."

The young man bowed, and endeavoured to express the satisfaction that Miss Gardener's company gave him; but he spoke in such a hesitating manner, and looked so confused, that the father could not tell what to make of him. Nothing could equal the transport that the unexpected rencounter had thrown Amford into; for, deceived by the uncommon resemblance of the two sisters, he mistook her who had comforted the afflicted, for the one he had seen at the ball the preceding evening. Her beauty fascinated his eyes the first moment he saw her, and her sense, affability, and modesty, made a conquest of his heart before he had been an hour in her company. "It is very odd," said he to himself, "that I did not remark last night that she had such sparkling black eyes, and they are so uncommonly beautiful, that I cannot think how they could escape my notice; it must have been caused by the superior charms of her mind,

mind, which shone in so conspicuous a manner, that they quite eclipsed her external perfections. But none, except a charming black-eyed girl, could have acted in the spirited and cautious manner she did last night; a blue-eyed one would not have had courage enough to do so."

Amford was so much delighted with the beauty of her eyes, that he could not admire them enough, nor look at any thing else. His penetrating glances did not escape Jemima's notice, and towards the end of the journey, she was so much confused that she did not know which way to look; besides, her agitation was increased by a strange fluttering that she felt about her heart. Amford was as happy as it was possible for a man to be during the ride; and he expressed his astonishment, when they came to their journey's end, at the shortness of it. The opportunity he had of speaking with his lovely fellow-traveller, convinced him that her understanding was enlightened and cultivated, and her way

of

of thinking, in various respects, entirely corresponded with his; and they felt much better acquainted with each other (for she behaved to him with the easy familiarity of an old acquaintance) when they returned to town, than they had done in the morning. Gardener, who had been in excellent spirits the whole day, said, when the carriage stopped at his door—"That it was a pity to part so soon; and that if Amford was not engaged, he should be glad if he would spend the evening with him in a family way." It is needless to say with how much pleasure the invitation was accepted.

Dawson had, in the meanwhile, been happy enough to spend near half an hour *tête-à-tête* with the fair Teresa, when her father, sister, and Amford, entered the parlour, and, to their no small surprise, found him there. He had knocked at the door, and enquired if the Counsellor was at home. The maid informed him that her master was out, but that he was expected

back

back every minute; and on his saying he would wait, he was shewn into the room to the young lady. He stammered an excuse for the liberty he took, and said much about the particular business that he wanted to consult her father about, which did not admit of delay, for he had learned his lesson by rote, and thought of a question or two to ask the counsellor, which he thought would frame a plausible excuse for his troubling him at that late hour. Teresa, with the politeness that was natural to her, offered him a chair, and assured him that her father would soon return, as he had promised to be back by tea-time, and that she was certain he would be glad to see him.

Dawson was delighted that his plan had succeeded so well; nor was he the only man that was taught the lesson of love at first sight by a pair of mild blue eyes, elegance of shape, and extreme delicacy of manners. That, thought he, is the ivory forehead, dove-like eyes, and flaxen ringlets,

that

that the envious hat concealed from my sight last night. But how is it possible for her to look otherwise than she does! Could any eye but that which resembles the azure of Heaven, contemplate and soothe the woes of others in the gentle and benevolent manner she did! No, a mind so gentle and good as her's, must inhabit such a form!

Teresa's polite attentions and kind endeavours to entertain Dawson, strengthened him still more in his error, and he was fully persuaded that she was the person he had seen the evening before. His admiration increased every moment, and with all his diffidence, and he really had a great share of it, he could not entirely conceal the impression she made on him. Teresa perceived the stranger's confusion, without suspecting that she was the cause of it; nor was she able to account for the strange agitation she was in herself, for she often blushed, and was frequently at a loss for words, when, to her no small relief, she heard

heard the welcome rap at the street-door, which relieved her from the aukwardest situation she had ever been in in her life. In describing it to her sister afterwards, she wished to make use of the term unpleasant, instead of perplexing; but in spite of her intention, she could not prevail on herself to do so.

The two friends spent the most agreeable evening that can be imagined, for Gardener, finding that Dawson was an acquaintance of Amford's, likewise invited him to stay. They went away together; and as they walked home, neither of them was so taciturn and mysterious as Dawson described his friend the evening before. They were both in high spirits, and shook hands so cordially, and in such an expressive manner at parting, as if each wished the other joy on the prospect he had of soon being his brother.

The next day they met again at the house in which all that was dear to them resided. They repeated their visits, and were soon received

received by the counsellor and his daughters on the footing of intimate friends. Each of them did all in his power to render himself agreeable to the object of his affections; and Hope, the nurse of Love, soon whispered to them that their endeavours would not prove unsuccessful.

One evening, it was the fifth they had spent together at the counsellor's, Dawson, late as it was, invited his friend to go home with him. Amford did so without making the least objection, for each wished to open his heart to the other. Dawson told his servant to order some punch, and then turned to his friend, who stood in a thoughtful manner, with his eyes fixed on the fire.

"A penny for your thoughts," said Dawson, clapping him on the shoulder. "I would lay a wager that you are thinking about what Jemima whispered to you, when you drew her aside just before we went away."

"You would win it," replied Amford: "But what she said puzzles me a good deal.

Jemima is, as you know, as artless and unaffected as it is possible for a girl to be; and yet when I mentioned the ball she was at, the evening before I went into the country with her, and my approbation of her conduct, she smiled, and said—" That was not me—it was my sister. Is it possible that——"

" What?" exclaimed Dawson in a hasty manner. " But no, it cannot be! It certainly was Teresa that I saw in the hovel, comforting and assisting the poor widow!"

" What hovel? Who is the poor widow? I never heard a word about them."

" Nor I of the ball!" replied Dawson.

They then related to each other, with eager haste, what they had seen and heard. Their astonishment was equal, they could hardly trust their ears, each repeated what he had just said, and when doubt was no longer possible, Amford exclaimed, after a long pause—" Then I find I am not in love with the girl I fancied I was!"

" Nor I neither!" said Dawson.

" But

"But I would not exchange my charming brunette for all the treasures the earth contains!" said the former.

"Nor I my blue-eyed girl!" was his friend's reply.

Each then began to enumerate the charms of his beloved, and dwelt on the scene he had witnessed, with a minuteness that none but lovers are capable of, till the call of the watchman, "Past two o'clock, and a cloudy morning," informed them that it was time to go to bed. They shook hands, and first wished each other joy, and then a good night. Amford turned round as he was opening the door, and said—"But I am glad, Dawson, that you was an eye-witness to the scene in the hovel."

"And I," replied the other, "that you was present at that which passed at the ball. My Teresa's heart, you know, is full as compassionate as her sister's."

The next morning the two worthy friends consulted on the best means of assisting the poor widow; and the method

they devised did honour to their heads and hearts, as it afforded her and her family a comfortable and permanent means of subsistence; and a few days after, previously convinced that their doing so was not disagreeable to the objects of their affection, they made proposals of marriage in due form to the father. As they were too advantageous to be rejected, the counsellor referred the lovers to his daughters, with the assurance that he had no objection, if they were approved of by them. They ——but why should I tire my readers patience with repetitions of what they already know? A few months after, for that time was requisite to make settlements, buy clothes, and furnish houses, the nuptials were celebrated; and two worthier couples never graced Hymen's altar, was said by all who knew their innate worth, nor two handsomer, was repeated by every one who saw them.

It was the day before the wedding that I heard the two friends disputing about

the

the beauty of their brides in the garden. My readers will, doubtless, recollect that each warmly asserted his own opinion at the time, and that I owned my incapacity of deciding which was in the right. I will, therefore, leave the point in question to their determination, and am sorry that my relation will not afford them much assistance in doing so; for all the light it affords in this critical case is, that goodness of heart, and amiableness of manners, possess a certain charm that may at times blind even the most enthusiastic admirer of beauty, and prevent his seeing if a lovely and good girl's eyes are black or blue, or the colour of her hair auburn or flaxen.

THE PORTRAITS.

THE morning-sun darted its golden beams one fine serene morning in the decline of summer, through the casement windows of the room, where the honest, pious curate of Enfield lay in a sound and refreshing sleep. The reflexion of the small panes of glass, with their leaden enclosures and frames, appeared on the walls and floor of the room; the glaring light was a little softened by the waving leaves of a row of autumnal flowers that were ranged in pots,

upon

upon a board, on the outside of the window, and three antique portraits, that stood upon the floor against the wall, seemed to smile in the pleasing light.

The curate was awakened from an agreeable dream about those portraits, by the ringing of the morning-bell that sounded from the steeple of the village church, and with the impatience of a youth who longs to hasten to the study of a new and favourite science, he leaped out of bed, huddled on a few clothes, and hurried, not to the window, as he was accustomed to do as soon as he got up, (for he was a great admirer of the beauties of nature) to regale his eyes with the sight of the freshness of the verdure in his garden, but to look at the pictures. With a smile of innate satisfaction, he lifted them up, one after the other, turned each of them different ways, placed them first here, then there, removed himself to a distance, and strove to find out the light that shewed them to the greatest advantage. He at last opened the door of

his best room, which was contiguous to his bed-chamber, and went into it backwards, still keeping his eyes fixed on the objects of his admiration.

He rubbed his hands in a transport of joy, like a person whose ardent wish is at last unexpectedly fulfilled. He sat down, moved from chair to chair, advanced a few steps, then retreated again, and often looked round, as if he was in expectation of seeing somebody enter, to whom he could communicate the pleasure he felt, and whose participation he seemed to think would increase it. "At last!" said he to himself two or three times in a low voice, and then suddenly exclaimed in an audible one—"At last, honest old Valping, I am happy enough to be possessed of thee, thy wife, and brother-in-law!" He then again approached the pictures, took up the damaged one of the latter with a sorrowful look, and carefully examined the canvas before and behind, to see if there was a possibility of repairing its defects, then

set

set it down again with a shake of the head, and then turned his eyes from the dismal sight to the others, seemingly glad that the accident which had so greatly disfigured the face of that, had not happened to either of them, as in that case the misfortune would have been greater than it was at present.

"At last I have thee, honest old Valping!" was again repeated by the parson, as he left the room. He ran down stairs, hurried into the kitchen, and soon returned with a bowl of warm water, a sponge, soap, and two clean towels. He first washed the worm-eaten frames, and then gently rubbed the paintings with a damp cloth, till he had cleared them from the dirt and dust they had contracted in their long exile, and made them look as well as it was possible for pictures to do, that had been painted above two hundred years, and ill kept a great part of that time. As soon as he had finished his laborious task, he hastened down stairs with his treasures under

his arm, to the parlour, that his wife and daughter Sophia might rejoice with him on the acquisition he had made. His wife met him at the door, with a kiss, and an affectionate—" Good morrow!" which he returned in a kind, but hasty manner, for he was impatient to impart the pleasure he felt to the objects of his tenderest affection. He looked a little disappointed at not seeing Sophia in the room, for although his wife always listened to the relations, he frequently entertained her with, of his family, with complaisance and attention, and seemed to set as great a value on the pictures of his ancestors as he did, yet he had often remarked that his daughter did so with more warmth and real inclination.

" Where is Sophia?" said the curate.

" She is gone to Hannah Clark," replied his wife. " The poor girl was quite as ill last night, as when you saw her in the morning. Sophia was there the whole afternoon, and would have sat up with her last

last night, but the girl would on no account consent to her doing so. 'No, my dear Miss Sophia,' said she, 'pray go home, for if you should catch cold or be ill, I shall never forgive myself, nor shall I sleep a wink if you stay here; but pray come again to-morrow morning, for nobody can comfort, nor give me my medicines so well as you can; and I always feel easier when I see you.' She went to her at break of day, but I expect her back to breakfast every minute. Hark! I think I hear the outer gate open," continued Mrs. Valping as she looked out at the window; "yes, it is her."

Sophia entered the room, and returned her father's salutation with a warm embrace, and a kind good morning. "I am sure, my dear father and mother," said she, "you will be glad to hear that Hannah is better. She has had a good night, and feels much easier this morning than she did yesterday. She desires to be kindly remembered to you both. You cannot think how

happy I am! But what have you got there? Surely not the long-expected pictures?"

"Yes, they are," replied her father; "and the knowledge of your having already performed a duty, gives me as much pleasure as they do. I hope you will be rewarded for it, my dear child, by the approbation of your own heart, and God send that neither temptation nor inclination may ever allure you from the paths that you at present tread in; and now I will shew you something that is very pretty. It was almost eleven o'clock when I returned from town last night, and I thought, as it was so late, if I shewed you the pictures, or mentioned them to you then, that the flurry they would throw you into, might prevent your sleeping: I therefore determined to say nothing about them, but set them in my bed-room till this morning. But," turning to his wife, "I am surprised, my dear, that you did not see them when you got up, for you was obliged to pass them when you left the room."

Mrs.

Mrs. Valping replied, that she had seen some pictures near the foot of the bed, but it was dusky when she rose, nor had she, to speak the truth, paid any attention to them, as she supposed they were some her husband had fetched out of the other room, as she knew he often changed the places of his pictures.

"I am glad you did not see them, for they were in a sad pickle," was his answer; "but, I believe, if I had been in your place, I should have had more curiosity than you. We will look at them at our leisure while we breakfast."

The two ladies sat down at the tea-table, and the curate went with his treasures, which he had not yet permitted them to peep at, to the other end of the room, that he might place them in as advantageous a light as possible.

"At last, my dear," said he, taking hold of his wife's hand, "I am happy enough to be in possession of old Valping, his wife, and brother-in-law, who I have so

often

often mentioned to you. You know my great-great-grandfather was this Valping's uncle, and he therefore was a near relation of mine. He was a learned and religious man, and one of the first in our town who publicly embraced the Lutherean doctrine. Look, what an open, venerable countenance he has; the longer I examine it, the more it pleases me—and is not strength of mind and integrity strongly stampt on every expressive feature—and does not courage and veracity beam from his large hazel eyes? Ah! he was a man indeed, who, in many respects, had not an equal! I believe I told you before, with what energy and warmth he delivered his sentiments one Sunday from the pulpit, and endeavoured to force conviction on the minds of his hearers. In the evening, a fanatic, licentious rabble broke his windows, and with horrid shouts and execrations threatened to pull down his house. He opened a window, looked out of it, and said in an undaunted manner—'You may demolish

demolish this glass, but the truths that I this morning uttered will bid defiance to these stories, and prove too powerful for your malice!'—And look there, how lovely and amiable his wife looks, in her neat and modest dress!—how becoming it is! Don't you think so?" Sophia smiled, and although she did not contradict her father, her looks denoted that she was not entirely of his way of thinking in the latter respect. "This is her brother," continued the curate; "he studied the law, had a place in one of the Courts of Judicature, and was esteemed by all who knew him for his probity and worth. It is a shame—an everlasting shame, that his picture has been so neglected by posterity. One of the ears, and the parts near it, have been devoured by mice, but happily the rest of the face is entire. I intend to hang old Valping and his wife up in the dining-room next to my great-grandfather's picture, for, I believe, by moving the rest a little closer together, there will be just room enough for them; but

but this (pointing to the damaged portrait) must be hung up in the back room, with the rest of the defaced and patched pictures. They would have been thrown away as rubbish long ago, if I had not taken pity on them; and truly, truly there are many honest and estimable persons among them, who, when alive, did not want mending. There is nothing that provokes me so much as the contemptuous manner with which our ancestors are frequently treated, or the indifference that many affect with regard to them. The old Romans, and they were heathens, thought differently in that respect, for they esteemed their progenitors so highly, that they often worshipped them as household Gods. But many amongst us Christians never think of their predecessors at all, although they were often more useful to their country, and better in every respect than their successors, who frequently enjoy the fortune they accumulated, and are adorned with the honours that their merit won, without making any enquiries about them,

them, and with shameful ingratitude, throw their pictures into a lumber-room, where they are covered with dirt, and devoured by vermin. But their doing so is both a sin and a shame, and I assure you, my dear wife and daughter, I should be very uneasy if I was not fully persuaded, that after my death you will set a value on, and carefully preserve, my family pictures, which, you know, I am very fond of, and have collected them with great pains, and not without expence. The pictures of deserving people afforded me pleasure during my life, and I am certain, you will not grudge them a place after my death; and if you cannot hang them up as orderly as now, at least put them into a clean, dry closet, where there are neither rats nor mice. You know, and I am certain, revere the virtues of the originals, for I have often informed you of their merits. There is not a single vicious person, nor one that does not do honour to our name, amongst them. They were not free from failings—who is?—and per-

haps

haps they had some that we cannot be accused of; but then we have others in their stead, which are very likely greater than theirs; and, in my opinion, it is highly unjust to ridicule the errors of former ages, and regard those with an eye of proud disdain, from whom so much could not be expected as from us, who can profit by the experience of upwards of two centuries more than they could. I cannot help comparing those who are guilty of that kind of folly, to a child who is sitting upon a chair in a stately manner, whilst his little brother, who has lived a year or two less than he has, is crawling about on the floor, and when the youngest child falls, the eldest bursts out in a loud laugh. But mark the sequel of the story! The child whose mirth was excited by the other's aukwardness, looses his balance, perhaps by laughing, and falls down as well as the other, with this difference, that he who was upon the floor received no damage, and could easily help himself up, but the other, who tumbled

bled from his seat, pitched upon his head, and was very much bruised. Do not let us resemble that child, but remember that it is we who reap the fruit of our ancestors industry. Let us imitate their virtues, and close one of our eyes to their failings, and with the other endeavour to find out the path by which we may avoid them. And now let me once more exhort you, although I know my doing so is unnecessary, to take care of the pictures when I am no more."

"My dear," replied Mrs. Valping, drying her eyes, "you have repeated those words two or three times whilst you was speaking, and now you mention the painful subject again. Why will you afflict Sophia and me in this manner? God forbid that we should be deprived of you!—that thought is too dreadful to be supported."

"No, my dear, dear father," said Sophia, kissing his hand, and bathing it with her tears, "you must not leave us—you are our all—we love you dearly; and what

would

would become of us were we so unfortunate as to lose you?"

"God's will be done!" replied the curate. "If he thinks fit, I shall be glad to remain with you both some years longer. We are poor, for my salary is too small to lay much of it aside, and affluence will not be your portion when I am gone. But your wants, my dear," turning to his wife, "are few, and the little I shall have in my power to leave you, will, I hope, be sufficient to satisfy them; and Sophia's industry, ingenuity, affability, and good heart, will, I trust, procure her friends, and enable her to earn her bread without being a burden to any body. Do not sob so, my dear—dry your tears, Sophia—God Almighty never deserts those who put their trust in him, and he will provide for you when it is no longer in my power to do so. Have I not often related to you the distress and persecution that several of my forefathers suffered, their cares and tribulations, and the wonderful manner in which Providence

often

often rescued them? That was likewise the case with this old Valping; he was obliged to combat against persecution, want, and calumny, for several years together, and his life was frequently in danger; but he conquered them all, and was happy at last. His Prince offered to reward the service he had done his country, by defending the rights of the church, and opposing the Pope's usurpations, with a bishopric, but he nobly refused it. "I have done nothing but my duty," was his reply; "for surely it is every one's duty to speak the truth; and what I did and suffered was in the name of Valping, and that is the name I will bear when I die!" He did so, and those of his successors who know how to estimate true merit, still revere his memory; and I am resolved that those two pictures shall have the best places in my best room."

Sophia, who had kept her eyes fixed upon the pictures, during the latter part of her father's speech, kissed the resemblance of him,

him, who that dear parent so highly commended, with a look of unfeigned veneration, and then said, in a sprightly and hasty manner, that disagreeable thoughts like those that had caused the last interruption, might not again force themselves into her father's mind—"So they shall! How they will ornament our room!"

"They will indeed!" replied her father. "I was peculiarly fortunate in many respects yesterday afternoon, as you shall hear; for I was too tired and sleepy last night to tell you all that happened to me during the time I was out. You know how how long I have wished and strove to make myself master of these pictures, and how vain every attempt of mine has hitherto proved. My cousin, the Captain, who set some little value on them, was determined not to part with them as long as he lived, and I therefore did not importune him on the subject. His son-in-law, Bernard, inherited them after his death, which, you know, was about two years ago. I

immediately applied to him, for I was certain his wife did not care a pin's point about any of her relations. He promised to give me the pictures, but desired me to call another time, as he did not rightly know where to find them; he, however, assured me, they should be looked for, and I might depend on having them. I called on him again and again, in all, I dare say, not less than ten times, and always received the same answer, that they were mislaid—(How was it possible to mislay things of that kind?)—but he would look for them the next day, and I should certainly have them when I came again. I was provoked at his dilatoriness, and my patience was nearly exhausted; but I nevertheless determined to persevere. I went to him again yesterday, and finding him in a better humour than usual, I determined to seize hold of the favourable opportunity. I fancy, said I, you are unwilling to part with the pictures, but you surely cannot refuse me the satisfaction of seeing them—

a plea-

a pleasure that I have been deprived of so long;—come, do oblige me. Bernard smiled, and replied that the pictures were found, and I should have them. Nothing could equal the joy that this unexpected intelligence gave me; I believe it could not have been greater, if I had been told that I had won the highest prize in the lottery. Bernard left the room to fetch them, but my impatience to see them was so great, that I could not wait till he returned; I followed him up stairs into—you would never guess where—into an old lumber-room, in a dark corner of which, and covered over with cobwebs, the pictures were thrown. Abominable! abominable indeed! Old Valping, his wife, and brother-in-law, thrown, like useless rubbish, into a lumber-room! Fortunately the two first had not received any material damage; if they had, I believe I should not have been able to keep my temper; but the mice, as you see, have greatly injured the latter, and would probably have

have devoured the whole face, if it had remained there much longer. It vexed me a good deal, and I should not have recovered from the ill-humour it put me into so soon as I did, if something had not happened afterwards, that gave me a good deal of pleasure."

"What was it?" exclaimed both mother and daughter in the same breath.

"You know," returned the curate, addressing himself to his wife, "how long I have wished to have our pictures in my collection. Your father and mother are in it as well as mine, and they are so well executed, and give us so much pleasure, that I cannot help wishing Sophia and her family (for I do not at all despair of her getting a good husband) a like enjoyment when we are mouldering into dust. But how to get them was a question not easily answered, for with an income so limited as ours, such expensive pleasures, as having our pictures painted by an able hand, was not to be thought of. Thank God, it is

is sufficient for our wants, it affords us food and raiment, and enables us to bestow something, although not so much as we wish, on the poor, a duty which never ought to be neglected to satisfy imaginary wants, or purchase superfluities. Good painters expect to be well paid, and they are right in doing so; for the artist, who in a manner perpetuates mankind, enlivens wood and canvas, delights the eye, and elevates the mind, ought not to be rewarded for his trouble in a niggardly manner. It was not in my power to pay a good painter, and I would not employ an indifferent one; for all the portraits above stairs are reckoned good, and some of them are said to be painted by great masters; I therefore would not disgrace my collection with miserable daubs. However, I am in no danger of that at present, for Mr. Nugent, the young gentleman, who lately bought Barford's house at Ripham, has kindly offered to paint us both in miniature (which is the kind of painting he excels in) gratis."

Mrs.

Mrs. Valping exclaimed, with a look of surprise—"But how, in the name of wonder, came you, my dear, to be so intimate with that strange gentleman, that he has offered to paint our pictures?"

"I am glad of it!" said Sophia, with a look that expressed the heart-felt pleasure the information gave her; "very glad indeed!—then I shall soon be possessed of what I have long secretly wished for—my dear father's and mother's pictures! But I cannot conceive how a person, who is as unknown to us as we are to him, came to think of it."

"You do not know him, but I do," replied the curate; "and I am certain I have mentioned him to you several times; but because he is a stranger, I suppose, you paid but little attention to what I said on that subject. The first time I saw him was about two months ago, soon after he had taken possession of his new house. I was very much pleased with his open honest countenance, the frankness and affability

of

of his manner, and his sensible and entertaining conversation. You know I love to speak my mind freely, and what he said seemed to be the genuine dictates of the heart, which made us approach each other with a certain degree of warmth that is but seldom felt at the beginning of an acquaintance; and my being told that he was a skilful painter, and devoted most of his leisure hours to the study of an art that I am so passionately fond of, did not a little increase the admiration that the knowledge of his other good qualities had inspired me with. About a month ago, I accidentally met him at a friend's house in town, and was shewn at the same time a picture that he had just finished, which, although I did not know the person it represented, gave me a high opinion of his taste and skill, for the drawing was perfect, and the painting inimitably beautiful. I contemplated it some time in silent admiration, and then suddenly seized hold of one

one of his hands, without any previous intention of doing so, and exclaimed, with the enthusiasm which, you know, I at times am incapable of restraining—'Sir, I assure you, that I esteem you very highly!'—'And I you;' was his answer. We were alone when this happened; and after some more reciprocal assurances of friendship and esteem, he shook my hand, and said—'I am not a man of compliments, but I assure you, I never met with a person whose manners and conversation pleased me better than your's. I hope you will oblige me by making my house your own when you come to town, and permit me to call on you sometimes. I flatter myself you will find nothing in me, on a nearer acquaintance, that will make you alter the favourable opinion you at present entertain of me.' When I went to town yesterday, it was my intention to call on him before I left it, but just as I returned from the lumber-room with Bernard, he entered the parlour, and staid there all the evening,

which was the principal reason of my coming home so late last night. He seemed to partake of the pleasure that the pictures gave me, and said once when we were alone—'I never yet met with a man of your age who was capable of rejoicing at any thing with the warmth and fervour that you do;—as I said before, we must be better acquainted, and, I believe, as a new-comer, it is I who ought to pay the first visit. I suppose, as you are so great an admirer of family pictures, you have got your's and Mrs. Valping's in your collection?'—'Alas! no,' replied I; and I frankly told him the reason of it. 'Well then,' returned he, 'I will paint you both; and if you will give me leave, I will wait on you to-morrow afternoon, and begin your picture."

"That's to-day," said Mrs. Valping. "Why did you not tell me sooner that you expected company, that I might have made a cake?"

"It is no matter," replied Sophia; "we

can

can make a syllabub after tea; that and the rusks my father brought home with him last night, with some grapes, peaches, and filberts, will make a pretty little entertainment. I am glad he is coming to-day," continued she, "for one cannot be acquainted with worthy people too soon; and perhaps I shall be happy enough to be possessed of one of your pictures this evening."

"He promised to be here about three o'clock," returned the father. "Give him what you please; the friendly welcome he will receive from us all, will, I am certain, make him satisfied with what you offer, be it ever so homely, for he hates fuss and ceremony."

With these words, and a friendly smile, he put the pictures under his arm, and carried them to the place of their destination. Sophia washed up the tea-things whilst he was hanging them up, and her mother went into the kitchen to give the maid some orders about dinner.

"When you have finished what you are about," said Mrs. Valping to her daughter as she left the room, "come to me, and we will go into the garden together, and gather the fruit."

During the time that the foregoing conversation passed between the unassuming and good-humoured inhabitants of the parsonage at Elfield, Nugent sat down, and wrote the following letter to a friend, who lived in a distant part of the country. To those of my readers who view the curate in a favourable light, and feel a little interested in his fate, it will perhaps not be disagreeable to be somewhat better acquainted with his new friend, who, by kindly anticipating his wish, had made his honest heart elate with joy, and in whose society he hoped to spend many happy hours; and as Nugent's way of thinking and character are pretty plainly delineated in his letter, we will insert a literal copy of it, and leave them to form what opinion of him they please:

"Dear

"Dear Friend,

"It is near three months since I wrote to you last, which I own is a breach of promise on my side, for we agreed at parting, to write to each other every fortnight; but who was ever at a loss to find an excuse for delaying answering a letter longer than he ought to have done? And love, for example, is generally reckoned a very sufficient one. May I not, therefore, with equal propriety, alledge my passion for painting, which, you know, is a sort of love, and very often proves the birth of that of a different kind, as an extenuation of mine? and, I assure you, that I never in my life painted with the diligence and enthusiasm I have done, since I wrote to you last, for every leisure hour I had was devoted to my palette and pencil. The reparation of my house, the alterations I made in my garden, and visiting my neigh-

bours, occupied me so much for some time after my arrival, that I was unable to devote an hour to my favourite amusement, of which I am more passionately enamoured than ever; and I never took so much pains to excel, nor ever discovered so many faults in any of my former performances, as I do in the one I have just finished. Perhaps my saying so may prejudice you in favour of my picture, and make you fancy it above mediocrity; for it is certainly a good sign when an artist is able to discover the faults he has committed, and ingenuous enough to own them. But, I assure you, I never found so many difficulties to conquer, nor ever was so dissatisfied with any production of mine, as I have been since I attempted a miniature, in which unsuspecting innocence, purity of mind, sweetness of temper, and, in short, every virtue adorned by the Graces, were intended by me to be expressed by a pair of the finest eyes, and play about animated features, coral lips, cheeks that were tinged with the glow of

health,

health, and the most beautiful auburn hair that ever was seen. I say intended—for although I did all in my power to render my picture as perfect as possible, and expunged and repainted different parts of it fifty times at least, yet when it was finished, I was obliged to own to myself, with a sigh of discontent, that it was but a faint shadow of her I had seen, and what I thought it would and intended it to be. But as what I have written must appear hieroglyphical to you, I will endeavour to express myself in more comprehensible terms.

"About six weeks ago the young Duke of Morville, whose principal seat, Morville Castle, is only a mile from this town, returned there after an absence of two years (which he had spent abroad on his travels), with his new-married Duchess; and as the day of their arrival had been fixed some time, his tenants, as well as the principal inhabitants of this town, through which they were obliged to pass, determined to receive them at the entrance of it, and

conduct them home. This intention afforded the honest peasants, as well as the rest, an opportunity of exerting their taste, as well as testifying the affection they felt for their Lord; and great preparations were made for the occasion, which varied according to the circumstances and inclination of those who projected them.

"The morning of the wished-for day at length arrived, and as the weather was remarkably fine, the town was crouded at an early hour with the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, and with persons of distinction, as well as those of the lower classes, who live within five miles of us. Every moment something new was to be seen. Garlands of flowers glittered in the sun, boughs rustled, streamers waved, obelisks raised their spiry heads, and arches, adorned with emblematical figures, were erected in the principal street, through which the procession was to pass. The bustle there was in the town as soon as the morning dawned, exceeds description, and one

one could hardly edge oneself through the croud of well-dressed and undressed people; the latter class, however, from the lady of fashion down to the journeyman and apprentice, shewed, by their rolled-up hair and other preparations, what they still intended making of themselves. Skipping children, young people, who ran rather than walked, old folks, who crept along, and sets of company, who had hold of each other's arms, and were jostled asunder by barbers' boys and powdery hair-dressers, who ran from place to place panting for breath, of whom, particularly the latter, may with truth be said, they that day earned their bread with the sweat of their brow; genteel men a-horseback, elegant and shabby carriages, one-horse chaises, phætons, bakers' carts, and waggons-full of people—frequently obstructed each other's passage, and formed the strangest groupes; and as the day advanced, the tumult increased.

"The Duke and Duchess at length

5 arrived,

arrived, and were received with the fondest acclamations of joy. Seeing the croud of people that were assembled on their account, they alighted from their carriage, and walked through the town, preceded by a band of music, and six pretty girls dressed in white, who strewed the way with flowers. The procession closed with a great number of the neighbouring gentry, tradesmen, and farmers in their best cloaths a-horseback, who had most of them rode some miles to meet the new-married couple, and escort them home.

"I was delighted with the scene, which excited a thousand pleasing and serious reflections in my mind, when, happening to turn my head round, I perceived a lovely creature dressed in white, and a violet-coloured shawl that entirely concealed her neck and bosom, standing almost behind me in the croud. The sight of her made my heart palpitate violently, and a voice within me seemed to whisper—it is she who must decide thy fate!—she is the ideal of

of perfection that thy imagination formed in its happiest moments, the subject of thy waking dreams, and ardent wishes! You, my friend, who know the warmth, the enthusiasm of my disposition, will not wonder at the chimeras that my fancy often created; and my not finding an object that by any means approached that ideal, is the reason of my remaining single so long as I have done. It is impossible to describe the perturbation of my mind at that moment, and was I to attempt to do so, I am afraid you would think me light-headed.

"The bluest of all blue eyes met mine, when I first perceived her with an expression that denoted pleasure; but she withdrew them, and looked another way as soon as she perceived that mine remained fixed on her. Was I to paint the picture of Persuasion, I would copy her lips, and her cheeks (which, owing to the pressure of the croud she was in, were probably tinged with a deeper carmine than usual), I should fix on for Hebe's. Good sense and uninterrupted good-

good-humour seemed to illumine her brow; her eye-brows were the finest I ever saw; and there was something so gentle and unassuming in her manner, that was there a possibility of the Virtues appearing cloathed in a human form, I should certainly have exclaimed—'Look, that is Modesty!'

"That I immediately offered the lovely girl my place, which was better than her's, hardly needs mentioning. She declined it in a polite manner, and said in a voice which was melody itself—'I am very much obliged to you, Sir, but I see every thing very well here.' I repeated my request, stepped back, and made way for her, in a manner that she could not, without exciting observation, help complying with it. I placed myself where she had stood, and by moving a little more sideways, I was able to feast my eyes with an uninterrupted view of the profile of her beautiful face, and when she turned a little to the left, I could see it entirely. I assure you, my friend, that I can still recollect with rapture

ture the beauties that I discovered in the works of different masters many years ago, and that so exactly, that I believe I should now be able to point out the defects I might perceive in any copy of them; but in spite of my admiration of Raphael's forms, and Guido's faces, this dear girl's will live in my memory when the remembrance of their works will be lost in oblivion; for lovely as she is, it was not the beauty of her complexion, nor the regularity of her features, nor the charm of youth, that added fresh graces to both, that fettered my mind; those I certainly should have remarked and admired; I must have been blind if I had not; but my admiration would have been transitory, if it had not been for the expressive sensibility and goodness of heart that animated her countenance—for that she really possessed both, I had an opportunity of witnessing more than once during the time that I observed her.

"A little curl-pated boy, who seemed to have straggled from his attendant, stood

near her, and cried. 'What is the matter with you, my dear?' said she.

'I have lost Betty,' replied he, sobbing, 'and I can't see any thing!'

"She lifted him up in her arms, dried his tears with her pocket-handkerchief, and said—'Don't cry, you shall see every thing. I will hold you up; and when the sight is gone by, we will look for Betty.' And she continued to hold him in her arms, although doing so must have been extremely troublesome to her.

"A little while after six girls passed by; they were prettily dressed in white trimmed with pink ribbon, with myrtle wreathes in their hair, and large nosegays of roses in their bosoms. I was curious to know what kind of impression the sight would make on her, and fixed my eyes on her face. She looked uncommonly serious, and I perceived that she at last wiped away a tear. I would give a good deal to know what was the reason of that tear, if it was caused by thoughts similar to those that occurred to me at the time—how lovely

is

is youth, but how soon that happy period of life is over! or by painful recollections that forced themselves into her mind at that moment. It is impossible for me to guess to which of those causes it might be owing, but I know the sight of her tears rendered her dearer to me than she was before; and I kept my eyes rivetted on her, as if I was afraid of loosing her, which, in spite of my endeavours to the contrary, I was unfortunate enough to do at last. One of the gentlemens' horses took fright and reared; his rider was hardly able to manage him, which terrified the people, and every one strove to save themselves as well as they could. It happened at a little distance from where I stood, and I was hurried away with the croud, without being able to make any resistance. I saw the dear girl clasp the child she held in her arms to her bosom, and I strove to hasten to her assistance, but was utterly incapable of doing so. The danger was but momentary, and happily no accident happened; the confusion soon abated;

abated, and every one strove to get into their former place, or a better one; but when I looked round, I perceived myself surrounded by strange faces, amongst whom my fair incognito was not to be found.

"It is almost unnecessary to say that I hurried away from the place I was in as fast as if I was standing upon burning coals. I had some difficulty to wind myself through the concourse of people, and force my way to the back part of the pavement, which was less crouded, as every one pressed as forward as they could. I buffeted myself along close to the houses, regardless of the curses that were vented on me, and the cuffs I received. I raised myself upon my toes every moment, and when I came to a step, I almost pushed the people who were standing on it down, to make room for myself, that I might look over their heads. But all my endeavours to discover the charming girl were fruitless; she was vanished, and not a trace of her was to be seen. I crossed over, and walked along the

the other side of the street with as little success; but fool that I was, I did not think of looking up at the windows, where, it is probable, a place might have been offered her by the owner of a house, who saw, and wished to relieve, the many inconveniences she was exposed to in the street, as I should have done in his or her place. But that thought did not occur to me at the time, and I felt as disappointed and vexed, as if a jewel of inestimable value, that I had long been possessed of, had just been stolen from me. The procession ended; I followed it with my eyes till the last person was entirely out of sight, and then said to myself with a sigh—'Alas! how transient is every sublunary pleasure!'

"I, however, found my charmer again, to lose her perhaps for ever! I returned home, and passed two of the most disagreeable hours I ever spent in my life. I stood at my parlour-window the whole time, thinking, as my house is in the most frequented part of the town, that there was a probability of her passing by it. But I was disap-

pointed in my expectation; and after waiting till my patience was quite exhausted, I snatched up my hat, and hurried into the street through which the procession passed, and, judge of my transport, saw her and another young woman, who seemed to be about her own age, looking at the obelisk. I was at a considerable distance from her, and her back was turned to me when I first perceived her; and I ran, or rather flew, towards the spot where she was standing; but when I was a few steps from her, I was obliged to stop and fetch breath, for my heart palpitated as violently, and I felt as flurried as a ventursome gamester, at the moment he is going to throw the die on which he has staked his whole fortune. My agitation increased every step I took, for I fancied my wish to engage her attention was written so plainly in my face, that it was impossible for her, or any body else, not to perceive it. I, however, came up to her at last, and made her a very respectful bow. She returned my compliment in such a polite and affable manner, as if she

wished

wished to thank me for the trifling service I had done her in the morning. A crimson blush overspread her cheeks at the moment she perceived me, which (I suppose you will call me a vain fellow for saying so,) I could not help regarding as a favourable omen. The fear of her thinking me impertinent, prevented my turning round to look at her again till I was at some distance, nor did I venture to stop till I was far enough from her, to prevent her entertaining any suspicion of my doing so on her account. I then stood still, and kept my eyes fixed on her whilst she was reading the inscriptions on the obelisk. I say, my eyes were fixed on her, but owing to the distance I was at, I could only plainly discern her white muslin gown and violet-coloured shawl. I could have passed and repassed her ten times, whilst I contemplated her at a distance, but the fear of giving offence, and another motive, nailed me to the spot I stood on. The kind look that accompanied the courtesy she made me, had given me more pleasure

pleasure than I am able to express, which, I was afraid, I might lessen, or lose entirely by passing her again. 'Who knows,' said I to myself, 'if she may not think my doing so, rude and assuming; she may then return my salute in a cold or disdainful manner; and I shall then be like the boy whose goose laid golden eggs, lose all by my precipitation.'

"Reason, however, whispered to me that if I remained where I was much longer I should lose her again, and that it was high time to form some determination. I therefore endeavoured to conquer my timidity and my scruples, and was going to approach the spot where she stood with the intention of speaking to her; but I had hardly advanced a step when I was overtaken by my footman, who had ran himself out of breath. 'Sir,' said he, 'Captain Morris and a coach full of ladies are just arrived:—they are come to dinner.—I have looked for you every where.' I turned back mechanidally, but recollecting myself, I

stood

stood still, and calling to my man, bid him run home, and tell the cook to prepare as good a dinner as she could in a hurry, and the Captain that I would be at home in five minutes. I looked round as soon as I had dispatched John, but the ladies had left the obelisk. I ran towards it, in hopes of overtaking them, but they were quite out of sight. I hurried up one street and down another, panting for breath, with equal ill-success; and all that now remains of my adventure is the remembrance of it, and her picture, that I painted with a lover's warmth, but which for all that does not by any means satisfy me, nor answer my expectation. To represent a handsome face, merely as a handsome face, is undoubtedly in the painter's power; for he has a blue that will match in colour the finest eye, a carmine which will equal, or exceed, the bloom of the loveliest cheeks and lips that Nature ever formed, and a pencil for the finest trait; but he is incapable of giving that animation to the features which is the

soul of beauty, or reflecting the virtues that inhabit the mind on the countenance, in the manner he wishes; at least, it was not in my power to do so, although I took all imaginable pains; for as often as I attempted it, I felt the same uncomfortable sensation that a person does whose hand is numbed with cold, when he attempts to grasp hold of any thing, which, in spite of his wish and endeavours, he finds himself utterly incapable of holding fast.

"However, in other respects, the picture is very like, and I intend shewing it to every body that expresses the least inclination to see my paintings, which till now a certain caprice has made me keep as concealed as possible, in hopes that by doing so I may discover the lovely original; but that, alas! is very uncertain, for there were such a number of strangers in town that day, and many who live at a great distance, that I hardly dare flatter myself with the expectation of being so fortunate. Who knows in what a remote town or village she may

may be doomed to pass her peaceful days, unenvied and unknown to all except those whom her attentions render happy; perhaps the lovely flower may bloom for a husband whose name may never reach my ear, and she may remain as ignorant of the impression she has made on my heart, as a shining star in the firmament is of its being the object that engages the astrologer's attention.

"But I am afraid I have tired your patience on this subject, which, I own, is so very interesting to me, that, I believe, I should not be able to tear myself from it yet, if I had not an engagement for this afternoon. I am going to Elfield, a neighbouring village, to visit the clergyman there. I have met him several times at different places since I have been here, and as there is something in his manner that pleases me, I am determined to cultivate his acquaintance. I resolved on doing so some time ago, but something or other always interfered, which prevented my putting my

sign into execution. But I happened to meet him again yesterday at Mr. Bernard's, a relation of his, and I then promised to pay him a visit this afternoon. He is not destitute of understanding, and is in every respect an honest, good kind of man; but what pleases me in him best is the warmth of his heart, the simplicity of his manners, and a certain originality in his character. He has some faults and many peculiarities; among the latter, I cannot help reckoning his violent attachment to his name and family, and the high estimation he holds his forefathers in. He is possessed of a collection of family pictures, which are to him of inestimable value; and I saw him yesterday in a transport of joy that exceeds belief, on his making an acquisition of a couple of old portraits that were not worth a shilling. He has likewise a great veneration for painters; and as soon as he heard I was one, his countenance brightened, he approached me with unfeigned pleasure,

and

and assured me of the satisfaction that the information gave him.

"Even his attachment to former ages, which he greatly prefers to the present, promises to afford me both amusement and instruction. It is true, that his judgment in this respect is not always to be depended on, for his partiality often leads him into errors, and he sometimes blames what every unprejudiced person must commend, and praises what to them cannot appear laudable. However, as he is neither censorious nor peevish, those little failings may be easily overlooked in an old man, for age naturally reflects with pleasure on the good old times that are past, and our's will doubtless be a subject of panegyric to succeeding generations. Has not every mortal his own Elysium? And cannot every village boast of having had its Golden Age? Why, therefore, may not my friend be permitted to wish our times as good as the former ones, if he fancies they were better than the present are?

"In short, the curate of Elfield is a man to my mind, and I intend to be very intimate with him. You have seen my little collection of portraits, and know how desirous I am to increase it, whenever I find a face that pleases me; I therefore must have his, for I never yet saw a countenance that was so true a mirror of the mind, for his features express every thought it forms, before his lips utter them. He hinted a wish, some time ago, to have his own and his wife's picture (it was before he knew I painted). I replied, that that was a wish which might easily be attained. 'Not so easily as you suppose,' said he; 'my circumstances will not permit me to enjoy such expensive pleasures; and, I assure you, the little probability there is of my ever being able to afford it, gives me a good deal of uneasiness.' Worthy old man! I am happy to have it in my power to remove that care, as I gladly would every other from thy mind! In my next, I will inform you of the reception I meet with,

and

and if my pictures are good resemblances; till then adieu!

"NUGENT."

Dinner was over at Elfield, and the worthy curate, his wife, and daughter, rose from their frugal meal, which was enlivened by cheerful conversation, the subject of which chiefly alluded to the valuable addition the picture-gallery had lately received, and the hopes they entertained of the sick girl's recovery. The father had visited her in the forenoon, and found her much better than the day before.

He sat down in his elbow-chair to take his afternoon nap, while his wife and daughter were putting the room to rights; but his mind was too much flurried to permit him to enjoy his accustomed repose. Finding his endeavours to sleep ineffectual, he yawned, bent forward, and pulled out his watch, which he held to his ear, and find-

ing it went, exclaimed, with a look of surprise—"That's a fib;—it must be near three o'clock, and it is only three quarters after one by my watch! There is no depending on these new-fashioned watches; I wish I had kept my old one; but the exterior of every thing is all that is regarded now-a-days. You smile, my dear," to his wife; "but is not what I say true? Do not many wear fine clothes, and bedizen themselves with ornaments that they call gold and silver, and some of them are really so, whose shirt is often in a woeful plight? Our forefathers were wiser in that, as well as in many other respects, for they paid no attention to outside shew, their coats were plain, but full and handsome, and not cut to the quick as our modern fine gentlemens' are; they wore neither ruffles nor frills, but their shirts were fine, and every thing else about them good. Their watches were unsightly, but they went; ours please the eye, and are good-for-nothing."

"But," replied Mrs. Valping, "you ex-

changed

changed your old watch for this, because it did not go right."

"Not quite right to be sure; it went too fast; but as I knew its defect, I was able to regulate myself by it. Uniformity in minds, or watches, is a merit that is seldom found in our refined times! But of what use is a watch to me that is seldom right, and sometimes goes too fast, and at others, too slow? I set mine by the sun yesterday, and see where the hand points to now! But I thought, Sophia," continued he, "you intended to pay poor Hannah a visit before our visitor comes? If you propose doing so, you must go immediately, for, I assure you, you have no time to spare."

"I will go directly, my dear father," returned she. "Hannah expects me; I promised her this morning to come to her in the afternoon, and I should be sorry to disappoint her. She is to take her medicine at four o'clock, and I will stay till I have given it her, for it is very nauseous, and

and her mother says I can prevail on her to take it better than anybody else."

"Do so, my dear," said her father; "it is our duty to visit the sick, and comfort the afflicted, as much as is in our power; but if you find her as well as she was when I left her, come back as soon as you can."

"You may depend on my returning at a little after four—and I do not suppose our visitor will come much sooner," was her answer.

"But you are mistaken," replied the curate, "he promised to be here by three, and I am sure he will keep his word; but it will be soon enough, if you come back at the time you mention. Mr. Nugent is a gentleman, and what is of more consequence, a worthy man and an artist; it is, therefore, but just to treat him with the respect that is due to his merit and talents. He has been kind enough to promise to paint your mother and me; and who knows, my dear," continued he, regarding

his

his daughter with a look of fond affection as he spoke, "if he may not extend his kindness to you. Your picture would complete my happiness."

With mild and affectionate words, with gestures that expressed both love and duty, and steps which by their haste shewed how impatient she was to administer the balm of comfort to her suffering friend, Sophia left the room, and about an hour after, exactly at the time Nugent promised to be there (although it was impossible to prevail on Valping to think so, for to him time seemed to move on leaden feet), a horse galloped into the yard, and the parson ran to receive his welcome guest.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the kind reception that he met with from both husband and wife, the pleasure it afforded Nugent, nor how heartily the old man expressed the joy he felt, and how highly he declared himself honoured by his visit; how he was conducted up stairs into the best room where the pictures hung, which was

so clean, and in such nice order, that one might have eat off the floor; how much he was pressed to partake of the offered refreshments, the excuses that were made for their not being better, and the assurance of their being exquisite—are matters that every one will suppose, and I will therefore pass them over in silence.

As soon as the first compliments were over, and the little company seated at the table on which the syllabub and fruit was placed, for the curate had insisted on having them before tea, he addressed himself to his new friend in the following manner:

"You find me here," pointing to the pictures, "in the midst of relations, who, I own, are dear to me. I honour them on account of their worth, and know the history of each—and some of them are very remarkable—by heart. I found a great number of particulars relating to my family, written on the blank leaves of an old bible that belonged to my grandfather, which account I have continued, and hope that

those

those that come after me will do the same. I often, and always with pleasure, look at these pictures, and strive to imitate the virtues of the originals. All our little family entertainments, such as birth-days and our wedding-day, are celebrated in this room: my birth-day was not kept this year, for part of my family went to town that day to see the procession, but next year my wife declares shall make me amends for that omission. If we live till then, you must dine with us that day." Nugent bowed. "Well, that's right;—you promise to come.—You may depend on my keeping you by your word. Pray step a little further this way," continued the curate rising and approaching the pictures. "That with the black velvet cap, and the female with the neat little head-dress that hangs next to him, are the first of my family that I have been able to trace, and their descendants follow in due order. That there is my grandfather, that is my grandmother's brother, that is his wife, and that is her

uncle. Those two that hang near the door are my father and mother-in-law." The old man went on in this manner for a considerable time without being interrupted by Nugent; and almost every picture afforded him an opportunity of saying something in praise of the person it represented. "I assure you, Sir," continued he, after he had stopt a moment to fetch breath, "there is not a single vicious person among them, nor would I suffer such a one in my collection; they were all sensible and good people, who gave everybody their due, fulfilled the duties of the different stations they were placed in, as well as they were able, suffered for the public good, and benefitted the world by their precepts and example. They were not free from human failings, but they possessed many good qualities that are not so common in our times as they were in theirs. You smile, Sir; but pray tell me, if one dare trust to appearances in this polished age? How few are what they seem to be! People are

civil to our face, and abuse us as soon as our back is turned—do not wish us well, and yet overwhelm us with professions of friendship, and pinch and torment us with a look of kindness, and a dancing-master's bow. Now what I mean is, that such duplicity was not so much in vogue formerly as it is now; our forefathers manners were rude and unpolished, but their word might be depended on; they were plain but honest. Only look at this old Valping—did you ever see a finer face, I do not mean a handsomer, but one that more strongly expressed integrity and courage? Does not one read in his eyes the words that I repeated to you yesterday?—'You can break this glass, but the truths that I this morning uttered, will bid defiance to your malice and these stones.' And the pictures of such people are now thrown into garrets and lumber-rooms, like old rubbish, to be destroyed by vermin!—shame!—shame! I cannot forgive Bernard nor his wife for their carelessness, and I shall tell them my

mind

mind pretty freely the first time I see them. Here, Sir, under this looking-glass, I intend to hang my wife's picture and mine, which you was so obliging to promise to paint: I hope you will be as good as your word?"

"Certainly," replied Nugent; "I am come for that purpose, and I hope one of you will sit this afternoon. This picture," continued he, taking one that was carefully wrapped up in several papers out of his pocket, "that I am going to shew you, is the size and manner that I like, and succeed in best. It is the portrait of a young lady who I saw in town some time ago: I do not know who she is, but her face pleased me so much that I drew it from memory; but, although I took all the pains in my power, I have not succeeded to my wish, nor have I done her justice."

Nugent removed the last covering as he pronounced those words, and handed the picture to the curate. Mrs. Valping, who had approached as soon as she heard the

picture

picture mentioned, stood close to her husband, with a look that denoted how curious she was to see it. But it is impossible to describe the surprising effect that the sight of it had on them both. They stared first at the picture, then at each other, and started back as if they were frightened.

"In the name of God, what is the meaning of this!" exclaimed Valping. "What an uncommon likeness it is!"

"Nothing but speech is wanting," returned his wife; "and only look, even the white gown and purple shawl that she had on the last time she was in town!"

"What! Who wore them?" exclaimed Nugent, trembling with impatience.

"Sophia!" and "our daughter!" was pronounced in the same breath by both the parents.

"God be praised!" was faintly articulated by Nugent, for surprise and joy almost impeded his utterance.

The astonished parents looked at the no less astonished lover; each strove to conceal

ceal the confusion that agitated their bosom, and the fruitless efforts only rendered it still more conspicuous; but Nugent's increased to a still greater height a moment after, for the door opened, and Sophia, lovely as an angel, entered the room.

"Ah, Madam, am I fortunate enough to find you here?" said he as he hurried to meet her.

Sophia started, and blushed as soon as she perceived him.

"Is it you, Sir?" said she. "This is an unexpected pleasure indeed! This," addressing herself to her parents, "is the gentleman who, I told you, was so obliging to give me his place when the procession went by. I knew you again the moment I saw you," continued she, turning to Nugent, "and am very happy to have an opportunity of thanking you for your politeness to me that day. I intended doing so then, but the nasty horses drove me to a great distance from you. I had lost my companion some time before, and found a little

little boy in the crowd, who I took away with me. His parents, who were standing at a window on the same side of the way, were not a little surprised to see their child, who they had left at home with the maid, in my arms. They came down to fetch him, and on being informed of the particulars, they insisted on my going with them. I saw you some time after at the obelisk, but you passed me in a hurry, and seemed to be looking for somebody."

Sophia was in high spirits at the beginning of her speech; but the effect it had on Nugent threw her into such a tremor, that she hesitated, coloured, and was at last so much agitated that she hardly knew what she said; but her heart beat still quicker, and her confusion increased to the highest pitch, when she saw her picture in her father's hand, who did not attempt to conceal it. Unconnected words, expressive looks, attempts to speak, sudden silence, confused thoughts, blushing, turning pale, fluttering, sighs, smiles, and a thousand

lightful sensations, chaced each other for some time with such velocity, that it is impossible for my pen to keep pace with them. The perturbation that each was in, however, abated by degrees, and the little company was at last composed enough to enter into a connected conversation, which proved so satisfactory to every one, that even the old gentleman forgot that he was to sit for his picture that afternoon.

Nugent was the first that recollected it. "It was my intention, my worthy friend," said he, "when I came here, to begin your picture to-day, but, I own, I am too much agitated at present to think I should be able to do so with any probability of success;" (I should not draw your features, but your daughter's, was what he thought)—"but I hope you will permit me to enjoy your company till evening, and allow me to visit you often? The pictures shall soon be finished."

He kept his word, for there never was a more diligent painter than Nugent. He

went

went to Elfield the next day to begin his task, and repeated his visits every day to continue it; but it cannot be denied that he contemplated the face he did not paint, with more attention than those he did. He, however, succeeded to his wish, and the pictures were striking likenesses of the worthy old couple. He brought them home one fine afternoon a few weeks after (for he had taken them to town with him, under pretence of giving them some finishing strokes, that he might have them framed and glazed), that they might be hung up in the place that was prepared for them. The old people went up stairs to perform that important business, and left the young ones in the parlour together. Nugent, who had not attempted to conceal his wishes, nor disguise his intentions from either parents or daughter since the beginning of their acquaintance, could not resist the favourable opportunity of declaring his passion in direct terms.

He approached the trembling and blush-

ing

ing maid, gently raised her hand to his lips, and said—"I have for some time, Madam, been happy enough to be in possession of your picture;—will you condescend to accept of mine in return?" He offered it to her with a beating heart, and she accepted it with equal palpitation.

This exchange of pictures led to a declaration of mutual love, and Sophia at last confessed, with a sweet confusion that increased her charms, that he had made as deep an impression on her heart at the moment she first beheld him, as she had done on his, but that she had strove to conquer her passion, and often blamed herself for it. Nugent, without listening to the last words, clasped her in his arms, and tenderly embraced her. Her parents entered the room at that moment, and were not a little surprised at what they saw; the young people immediately owned their love, and Sophia strove to conceal her blushes by hiding her face in her mother's bosom. The old woman wept, the father endeavoured to restrain

restrain his tears, but finding himself incapable of doing so, he gave a loose to them. "God be praised," said he sobbing, "for giving me such a son! Your words and actions, worthy young man, convinced me, from the first moment of our acquaintance, that honour and sincerity are still to be found on earth, and that there are men in it such as old Valping was! Be our son, and may the Almighty bestow his choicest blessings on you, and my dear good girl! Do not be surprised at my calling her good, for she is really so; and may the best of daughters prove the best of wives!"

The marriage was celebrated soon after; the father joined their hands, and Sophia is the happy wife of the happiest of husbands; And now there are great preparations making at the parsonage of Elfield; the best room, in which the pictures hang, is fresh scoured, and old Valping and his wife are in a prodigous bustle, for to-morrow is his birth-day, and the birth-day of his daugh-

ter's

ter's love. They expect their children to dinner to-morrow.

"We will keep the day sumptuously," said he to his wife, just now;—"no cost shall be spared! Nugent promised me, the first time he was in this room, to come to my next birth-day; but how little did I think at that time, that he would be my son, and the staff of my declining age! Father of Mercy, I thank thee for this, and all the other blessings that thou hast bestowed on me!"

THE

THE TOY.

ASPINGTON was, through his application to business, indefatigable industry, and prudent economy, become an opulent and respected merchant; and with his riches he possessed, what was of infinitely greater value, experience, and the power of making a proper use of the gifts that Fortune had bestowed on him, for as he employed them, they were a comfort to himself and a benefit to others. He had an affectionate and amiable wife, who had borne with equanimity the various vicissitudes of fortune

they had experienced; and several hopeful children promised to be the comfort of his age; but the distance he lived at from his native country, and the little probability there was of his ever beholding it, or the village in which he first drew breath again, was, "that something unpossessed," which every mind feels in a greater or less degree, that at times clouded his with a gentle melancholy. His parents died soon after they had bound him apprentice to a merchant in a foreign country, several of his nearest relations shared their fate (how often are large families entirely extirpated from towns and villages), and this was the reason of his not again returning to the happy abode of his youth, and the friends he had left there, who he still remembered with the tenderest affection. But scenes of former times were never so present to his mind as when business, which was often the case, obliged him to absent himself from home for some time. With a quick sensibility such as he possessed, and his extreme attach-

attachment to the domestic enjoyments of life, it will naturally be supposed that he often thought, with fond and anxious care, on the dear objects he was separated from, and with those tender sensations the recollection of his native country, and the happy days he had spent in it, were always inseparably united.

He felt this combination of ideas more powerfully than usual, once when his occupations obliged him to pass two or three days at a place where he was entirely a stranger. He arose early in the morning after his arrival; and as neither the inn nor town promised to afford him much amusement, for the faces he saw in the former were strange and uninteresting, and the aspect of the latter gloomy, he determined, as soon as he had breakfasted, to ramble about the hour or two he had to spare till business required his attendance, and to solace himself during his solitary walk with contemplating the beauties of Nature, and

 thinking

thinking of those he loved, who were far, far distant from him.

At a little distance from the town, he was delighted with the view of a fruitful plain gilt with the rays of the morning sun, the bustle of the hay-makers, the verdant hills that terminated the prospect, the transparent stream that gently meandered along, and was shaded on one side by a row of willows, and bordered on the other by some fertile meadows, on which lowing herds were grazing. But what attracted his attention more than all the rest, was a farm that commanded a view of the extensive plain. The extreme neatness of the house and yard, and the appearance of every thing in the latter, convinced him that the owner must be a prudent, wealthy, and industrious man. He stood still, and surveyed it some time, and thought, as he at last walked on—"Happy man! business does not oblige thee to leave thy wife and family." There was a rising in the ground at the back of the little estate—when at the top

top of it, Aspington again stood still, and reviewed the farm-yard, and the garden which was contiguous to it, that seemed to be very large, and enclosed on both sides by fresh-trimmed yew hedges. The neatness and order that was visible in the garden, its lands with various sorts of the best kinds of vegetables, its loaded fruit trees, smooth gravel walks, and neatly cut espalier hedges, would, in themselves, at any other time, have been sufficient to have rivetted his attention; but what particularly fixed it at that moment was, the whole arrangement of them seeming familiar to him.

At first he fancied he must have lately seen something very like the spot he was admiring, but he could not recollect where; but after minutely examining the entrance, and different parts of the garden, he suddenly, as if by the power of magic, found himself transported to the place of his nativity, and although well knowing the distance he was from it, he could hardly

help exclaiming—" My native village!—Lucas's garden!—Lucas!—Adolphus!" For exactly like this was the entrance into farmer Lucas's garden, whose son, the lively good-humoured Adolphus, was his playfellow, and at that time possessed his undivided affection. Just like this, close to the gate, there was a green arbour, and behind it just such another little fish-pond, encircled, like this, with rushes, whose russet silky heads used to please him so much when he was a boy. Exactly like this did a skittle-ground run between two hedges of corinth and gooseberry bushes, and just such another apple-tree stood at the end of the walk. " My dear Adolphus," said he to himself, " has chance, or some sympathetic mind, thus happily imitated the paradise of our childish years? I can hardly persuade myself that this is not the arbour where we used to prepare snares, and spread birdlime to catch sparrows and linnets; and that seems to be the very pond where we used to feed the carp with crumbs of bread,

and those the rushes from which I have cut many a waving twig; this the hedge in which the sparrows bred, this the skittle-ground where we used to play in summer when we had half-holidays, and that the tree in which we once found a robin's nest!"

He removed his eyes from the garden, and turned them to the farm-yard with impatient curiosity, to see if he could likewise discover there any objects, that, like old friends, would be dear to him. Pigeons fluttering about the dove-house, or sunning themselves on the roofs of the barns and stables, fowls scratching, and carefully picking up the grains of corn that were scattered upon the ground, ducks swimming in the pool, cows and oxen, some lying, others standing, and playful cal[illegible] frisking about them, and two wa[illegible] [illegible]us [illegible]load- of hay that the busy labourers [illegible] [illegible]her farm- ing, were objects that e[illegible] [illegible] yard might have pro[illegible] [illegible]as well as this; but here every th[illegible] [illegible]terested him more than

than he could account for; but when he saw the well, he could hardly contain himself, for, oh marvellous! it was exactly like Lucas's. His, like this, was covered with boards that were painted green, the top ornamented with a wheat-sheaf in carved work, and a sickle in the middle of it; and he almost fancied he saw the water-wagtail that he once shot off the top of the well, as he was standing near it with his friend Adolphus.

Astonishment and pleasure alternately filled Aspington's mind, and unwilling to remove from a spot that had afforded him so much delight, he seated, or rather laid himself upon the verdant carpet, which was pleasingly variegated, and rendered aromatic by the quantity of wild-thyme and [illegible]eet cowslips that grew upon the hillock, a[illegible] fancy range unconfined, till he suppo[illegible]s nearly time to return to town; and [illegible] reluctantly tore himself from the char[illegible]pot, which he determined [illegible] mined

mined to visit frequently whilst he remained in those parts.

Thoughtful, and with lingering steps, he walked past the front of the house; a rosy-cheeked boy, lovely as a cherub, was sitting upon a stool at the gate: Aspington looked very earnestly at him, and at last fancied the child resembled somebody he knew, although he could not recollect who it was. The boy's attention was so much engrossed by a plaything he held in his hand, that he hardly remarked the stranger's standing still, and looking at him. The toy was indeed a curiosity of its kind; it was a mine, in which there was several miners at work, in different attitudes; a number of implements, such as lamps, hammers, pullies, wheel-barrows, and baskets with and without ore, were carved and painted in a neat manner; and a glass was blown over the whole to preserve it from the dust. "Am I under the influence of enchantment to-day!" thought Aspington; for never before had the early scenes of life been so present to

his mind as they were at that moment. He remembered that exactly such a toy was once the costliest treasure he possessed, and that the produce of a gold or silver mine could not afford their proprietors more pleasure than the pearls, black men, and shining ore in his glass, did him.

The sight of the toy brought Adolphus again to his mind, and he recollected that in a dangerous fit of illness that playfellow had, when they were about seven years old, he had given him just such a one to amuse him, and the conflict that passed in his own heart before he could prevail on himself to do so. He thought he saw the sick child raise himself up in his bed to receive it, the surprise and pleasure his features expressed, and the faint smile that appeared on his pallid lips, whilst he thanked him for a treasure, the possession of which seemed to include every thing valuable that it was possible for him to desire either at present or in future.

Aspington stepped nearer to the child with

with a palpitating heart, and said, as he stooped to examine it more minutely—"What a pretty plaything you have got!"

"Yes," lisped the boy; "mamma only gives it me to look at when I am good—she always keeps it locked up."

"What is your name, my dear?" said Aspington.

The boy fixed his large black eyes on him, as if he was surprised he did not know it, and then said, with an arch smile, as he turned them from him to his toy—"Charles."

"But what is your father's name?"

"Why, papa, to be sure."

"And his other name?"

"Sir."

A tear started into Aspington's eye as he examined the plaything, for who can contemplate the trifles that composed the happiness of their childish days unmoved? and it was impossible for two peas to resemble each other more exactly than this; and the

toy

toy that once was his did, and he was fully convinced that the same workman must have made them both. Exactly like this, there was a miner at work on his knees in one corner, a vein of ore ran in the same direction, and just in the same spot a bucket and wheelbarrow stood. Charles, who had attentively watched the stranger during the time he was looking at his toy, and the earnestness with which he did so, did not escape the boy's notice; he therefore supposing it was his design to rob him of it, hastily pressed it to his bosom, and ran into the house as fast as he could. "There is a man at the door," said he, sobbing, "who wanted to take it away from me, but I would not let him have it.—Look, there he is."

Aspington, who had walked on a few steps, turned round, when he heard the child's voice, and saw a well-looking, middle-aged man, plainly dressed, standing with him at the gate. Aspington looked, started,

 and

and then exclaimed—" Yes, 'tis he—'tis Lucas himself!"

" Good God!" replied Lucas, (for it was really he), as he rushed into his friend's arms, " is it possible!—is it you, my dear Aspington!—am I happy enough once more to behold my friend!"

" Aspington!"

" Lucas!" was repeated a number of times, for so much did joy overpower their faculties, that neither of them was able to add another word for some minutes.

Lucas was the first that recovered from his surprise.

" Come in! O come in!" said he, taking hold of his friend's hand.

Charles seized hold of the other; and Aspington, without rightly knowing how it happened, found himself in the parlour. A handsome young woman, leading a fine little girl that seemed to be about a year old, entered it immediately after, and Lucas introduced her to Aspington as his wife, and Aspington to her as the best beloved of his

youthful

youthful friends and schoolfellows—him, who once when he was ill, had given him the toy that he still valued as a relic. It is impossible to describe the variety of sensations that passed in the hearts of friends who had been separated above twenty years; I shall therefore pass over in silence what ours felt; but both were thankful that Fortune had been kinder to them than to many others, who, like them, loved, were separated, and remained ignorant of each other's fate, and who met, and jostled against each other, without suspecting that he they passed with such frigid indifference, was the friend they loved and valued most. Before half an hour was expired, Lucas was acquainted with every circumstance that concerned his friend, and Aspington knew by what a fortunate combination of events Lucas became master of the farm he lived in; how he gained the confidence and esteem of his wife's father, to whom it belonged, and his daughter's love; that she, being an only child, inherited the estate after her father's

death,

death, which he had greatly improved since that time; and through a fond partiality for his paternal abode, he, in the alterations he made in the garden and farm-yard, had endeavoured to give them as much the appearance of his father's as he could, and as his friend had discovered the resemblance, he was convinced he must have succeeded tolerably well in the attempt. It is almost needless to add that Aspington's portmanteau was immediately fetched from the inn, that he spent no more time in town than his business obliged him to do; that the worthy friends generally breakfasted, and spent part of their evenings in the green arbour; that they continually reminded each other of former scenes; that the youth of each seemed to be renewed, and that Aspington delayed his departure two days longer than he intended doing, which he devoted entirely to his friend. Never was a visitor received with more cordiality, or entertained with greater hospitality, nor never was a guest better satisfied with the

reception he met with, and the attentions that were shewn him, nor was ever sorrow more unfeigned than that which each party felt at parting.

Aspington bought toys for his youngest children, as like the mine as he could procure, and never did he see the amusement they afforded them, without gratefully remembering the four happy days he had spent at his friend Lucas's, which he with reason reckoned amongst the happiest of his life. The next spring his wife accompanied him in a visit there; and she being as much delighted with the spot, and the society of his friend and his wife, as he was, they hired a neat little house and garden in the neighbourhood, that happened to be empty at the time; and as it proved eligible in every respect, Aspington purchased it soon after. His wife and family always spent some of the summer months there, and whenever business would permit him to absent himself from town for a few days, he always flew with impatience to that

loved spot which was now doubly dear to him.

Thus, by a lucky chance, the friendship that commenced in youth, or rather infancy, was cemented in maturity, and continued undiminished to the last hour of their lives.

END OF VOL. II.

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